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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 1 November 2010

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Deborah Deller

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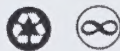
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} novembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. John Milloy: I know members in this House are probably very familiar with Skills Canada, an organization that promotes trades among young people. One of the ways they do that is through a competition. Skills Canada Ontario is represented here today at Queen's Park, as well as the winners of the national Skills Canada competition that was held in Waterloo. These young individuals will be going on to represent Canada at the international skills competition in London, England.

I'd like to recognize them here today. They're over in the gallery. We have, first of all, Ian Cunningham, a director with Skills Canada Ontario, and Gail Smyth, executive director of Skills Canada. Then we have the student competitors: Tyler Hackney, Jonathan Sinke, Ryan Gomes, Benjamin Church, Adrian Schut and Tom Midlebro. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

There's a reception tonight for Skills Canada-Ontario at Stop 33 at the Sutton Place. All members are welcome to celebrate Ontario's champions.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to welcome the family of today's page captain, Eric O'Brien, from the great riding of Oxford. Here with us today at Queen's Park in the members' gallery are his mother, Kristine Hamilton, his father, Steve O'Brien, his brother Liam and his cousin Evan Samson. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to introduce Elle Doherty's father and sister, Lonny and Maya. Elle is our page from the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce.

I also have in attendance my nephew Justin Jain and my daughter Jasmine Mitchell.

Welcome, all. It's a great day for Huron-Bruce.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce Lucas DaSilva, who is here to watch question period on his day off from school today. Welcome, Lucas.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to take an opportunity to introduce His Worship Fernando Campos, mayor of Boticas in Tras Montes, in the northern region of Portugal. He's joined by his wife, Dona Graca, as well as Mr. Abel Barroso and Aldina Barroso. They're joined by Mr.

John Goncalves and Mrs. Idila Goncalves, who are the organizers of their visit, together with Mr. Raimundo Favas and Lucia Santos, long-time volunteers in our community. They were here this weekend to support Santa Casa da Misericordia de Boticas, and they were joined by Minister Peter Fonseca as well.

Remarks in Portuguese.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, families in Ontario woke up this morning to find out that you've turned time-of-use smart meters on their heads; now they're being charged the highest use for energy between 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Obviously, it will hit families quite hard.

The additional surprise, we understand, that you have in store for Ontario families is an expansion of your already hidden and greedy hydro tax, which cost consumers some \$53 million last year.

Is it true, Minister, that you plan on expanding this greedy hydro tax to natural gas, just as we're heading into the winter heating season?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As usual, the Leader of the Opposition is misinformed. The Ontario Energy Board came out with the regulated price plan for consumers. It was very clear, and it was just a number of weeks ago.

Time-of-use pricing for consumers on smart meters was adjusted as follows, and I suggest the Leader of the Opposition take note: Off-peak price decreases went from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour; mid-peak did go up from 8 cents to 8.1 cents per kilowatt hour; on-peak prices remain unchanged. The estimated price impact for residential consumers on time of use will be a reduction of \$1.21 per month. I recognize that's not a lot, but nonetheless it is a reduction.

One would think that the Leader of the Opposition would recognize the importance of encouraging people to shift off of peak usage; how that saves the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yet again, another promise by a McGuinty cabinet minister that hydro prices are going down. Quite frankly, families won't believe this promise, because every promise you've made on hydro prices has been broken. They're going through the roof.

Let me put this into perspective, Minister. Now, as we're heading toward the cooler winter season, you're increasing the cost of using energy in the mornings, as families are getting ready to go to school, and in the evenings as the kids come home for dinner and to do their homework. On top of that, in addition to the \$53-million tax grab you had on hydro bills, you're planning on putting this on natural gas. Millions and millions of Ontario families depend on natural gas to heat their homes. Minister, please tell us it's not true that you're going to slap down a brand new tax on natural gas just when the winter season is hitting.

1040

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is speculating, as he likes to do, trying to use fearmongering to consumers at a time when consumers need transparency. I'm looking forward to bringing forward the long-term energy plan for this province, which will provide that transparency, that certainty, and maybe take away some of the opportunities in which the Leader of the Opposition likes to engage in fearmongering and trying to ensure that consumers in fact don't know what actually is going on around the province.

What I can say is this: The Leader of the Opposition came forward with his own idea not long ago, an idea that he indicated would bring prices down. We've looked into it. His idea of providing options would do nothing but put prices up for consumers right across this province. They would increase administration costs; they would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I appreciate that the minister says that he's looking forward to bringing forward his long-term energy plan. We're also looking forward to the Leafs finally winning the Stanley Cup. The problem is, we don't know just which one is going to come sooner.

I say to the minister, you are now, with your new smart meter time-of-use rates, these tax machines, actually telling families that they have to have the kids showered and ready for school before 7 a.m. When they get home, I guess they can hang out in the dark until they can do their homework after 9 p.m., with your new rates. And now, Minister, you are planning on bringing in an increase on taxes on natural gas, just as we're hitting the cold winter season.

You're saying that we're speculating; Minister, you gave yourself authority to do so in the legislation. We think you're going to use it. Yes or no: Are you planning another sneaky tax grab on natural gas bills just when we're hitting the winter season?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not going to speculate, as the Leader of the Opposition would want me to do on that, in any way. What I will say is this, and this is the fact: The Leader of the Opposition would try to claim that he's proposing something that would save everybody money. Clearly, we've looked into it. It will not. What he's proposing would create confusion and uncertainty among consumers. What he's proposing would kill the benefits of time-of-use pricing while increasing its costs through

billing system changes and more administration, sinking the investments that we've made in smart meters. What he's proposing would increase the administrative burden on local distribution companies, driving up their costs and forcing them to recover that from consumers.

He says one thing in this Legislature, but when he finally comes out with something, it's very clear that he didn't think it through. The Leader of the Opposition, if we were to listen him today, would be putting up the rates of consumers right across this—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment she just made, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Energy: If your smart meter tax machines were such a good thing, then consumers would choose them. The Ontario PCs believe in giving Ontario families a choice. Whether they want to participate in the program or not, you want to force it down their throats.

But Minister, with all due respect, you seem to be trying to get around my question a bit here. It's a very simple, straightforward question. You have given yourself the authority to impose a new tax on natural gas just as we hit the winter season. Despite your advice to consumers to turn off the air conditioners in November to save on their time-of-use pricing, surely you understand that natural gas usage goes up in the winter time, when it tends to snow and get colder. Let me ask you, Minister, very directly: Will you, yes or no, bring in a new tax on natural gas in the province? Yes or no? Please say no.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I said earlier that all of our initiatives will be made very, very clear in the long-term energy plan. I'm not going to speculate on that idle speculation taking place over there. I can tell you that we have no plans to move forward in that direction, but I'm not going to speculate on that in any way.

What I will say is this: The Leader of the Opposition gets up in his place day in and day out and talks about his concern about rising energy rates, yet when he does come forward with some initiatives, they have the effect of increasing costs to consumers. In the same speech that he moved forward with his so-called option to consumers—and the only option it's going to involve is increasing rates to consumers—he also speculated on nuclear. He said that we should be purchasing nuclear units today. It would have cost us billions more dollars if we had taken his advice to buy nuclear—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Perhaps I could, with respect to the minister, ask him to temporarily leave the fantasyland of his last number of questions and deal with the hard realities that Ontario families are facing today.

Under the McGuinty government, hydro bills are going through the roof. They're impacting quite hard on senior citizens and Ontario families. You've added an 8% increase with the HST now on hydro bills in the province. You brought forward a sneaky hydro tax that you have buried in the regulatory charges so it doesn't even appear directly on the bills. You've claimed these things are conservation initiatives, but it goes into the general revenue fund.

All of that is bad enough. All of that is hitting hard on Ontario families today. All I'm asking you is to just say no to another greedy tax grab on natural gas, particularly as we're heading into the winter season. Just say no.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've been very clear. In a time when we do have to increase investments to ensure that we deliver a strong, reliable and clean energy system, we're doing everything we can to bring those prices down. So let's be very clear about that. We're doing everything we can. We're making sure that our energy partners do everything they can to ensure that whatever increases they need to come forward with, it's only increases that are providing value for money.

We've had to come a long way and we've had to build up this energy system that was left in distress seven years ago when the previous government was not making the important investments in the system, when the previous government was not ensuring, in fact, that we had enough supply to meet the demand of Ontario families. We've had to make important investments to ensure that we provide the strong, reliable and clean energy system that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Every time that the Premier wants to install another greedy tax grab, he tends to dress it up as an environmental initiative. We saw that with your eco tax grab that would slap a new tax on 9,000 items that families use each and every day, and I'm proud that the Ontario PCs stood on the side of Ontario families and fought that tax and caused you to back down.

Now we're taking up the fight again. We know that you have a plan to bring in an additional tax, not only on hydro bills, which you hide under the regulatory charges, but on natural gas as well. Minister, this is simply unaffordable to Ontario families. They cannot take any more of these hits on their pocketbooks by Premier McGuinty. Please tell us right here, right now, that you are cancelling your plans to slap a new tax on natural gas in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the Leader of the Opposition has no idea what he's talking about. There's no such plan. He's speculating. It's idle speculation. It's the typical fearmongering on hydro rates that's been going on far too long, and that's why I'm looking very much forward to moving forward with our long-term energy plan. Our long-term energy plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: They had their chance when they were in power, and what did they leave us? They did not

invest in a strong and modern energy system. They did not invest in a cleaner energy system. They did not invest in reliability. They were preoccupied with selling off hydro assets. Their experimentation with deregulation cost our consumers a billion dollars. Every time I look at my bill and see that debt retirement fund, I see that Leader of the Opposition's face—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The McGuinty government's new time-of-use hydro rates are kicking in today and families are getting ready to be whacked with another round of hydro bill hikes. Can the minister assure households that every single penny of their sky-high hydro bills is going to be put to good use?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the leader of the opposition for the question. Obviously, when the Ontario Energy Board came out just a few weeks ago and indicated that indeed the regulated price plan would be small and modest decreases for consumers, this is what they said: Off-peak prices will be decreased from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents. That's a decrease, not an increase, as the Leader of the Opposition, I think, would have people believe. Mid-peak price increases would go up from eight cents to 8.1 cents—a little bit; not very much—and on-peak prices would remain the same. The estimated bill impact for residential consumers of time-of-use would be a reduction of \$1.21 per consumer.

1050

We recognize that that's a modest reduction, but it's a far cry from the fearmongering of the leader of the third party.

We're doing everything we can to ensure that our consumers are getting value for money. We're working very hard with our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What I specifically asked the minister was: Is every single penny going to be put to good use? That was my question.

Elections Ontario records show that the Ontario Liberal Party accepted thousands of dollars in donations from municipally owned utilities. Essex Power put nearly \$3,000 into Liberal Party coffers, while Thunder Bay Hydro made a donation to the Thunder Bay–Superior North Liberal riding association.

Why are families who are already feeling the squeeze funding the Ontario Liberal Party when they're paying their hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The leader of the opposition gets up day after day and criticizes the important investments that we're making to build a strong, reliable and cleaner system of energy. Just a few weeks ago, we took four coal units off of power, something we couldn't have

done—we couldn't have taken them out of our system without these important investments.

There was a time when the NDP stood for something. There was a time when the NDP believed in cleaner air, when the NDP believed in healthier outcomes for our kids and grandkids. There was a time when the NDP supported initiatives to get us off of coal, but day in and day out the NDP stand up and oppose the important investments we're making to ensure that we can get the system to where it needs to go.

I think they've lost their way. I think they've lost their principles. There was a day they stood for something. I think today—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's more local utility largesse flowing into Liberal coffers. Hydro ratepayers in Oakville made a generous \$15,000 donation to the Ontario Liberals, and Sudbury hydro customers helped out the governing party, too.

Why should Ontario families believe that their skyrocketing hydro bills will go to new electricity infrastructure when they see tens of thousands of dollars going straight to the Liberal Party?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the leader of the opposition gets up and—it was only about a month or two ago when she got up in this Legislature to give us figures that were 500% wrong.

I think it's important that we talk about the things that are important to Ontarians, things that used to be important to the NDP. Just to show you how far the NDP has strayed, let me quote from Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, when he said this: "More clean energy jobs in Ontario isn't just good news for workers.... It's good news for everyone who wants cleaner air and lower emissions. Across this province, we're creating jobs and replacing old, polluting energy like coal with clean, modern energy like wind and solar."

He goes on to say, "People who want to go backwards"—and I think he's pointing his finger over there—"and use less renewable energy need to be honest.... They're fighting job creation. Energy companies are hiring people in Ontario as a direct result of Ontario"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Minister of Energy. Families are telling us that they simply can't afford to pay any more. Every single penny of their household budget counts, and they don't want to see those pennies funding the Ontario Liberal Party.

The new smart meter bills kick in today. Why are rates increasing at the exact same time when families are busy preparing to get off to work and school in the morning and when they're getting home from work and school in the afternoon?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Whatever happened to the days when the NDP cared about cleaner air? Whatever happened to the days when the NDP cared about the health of ourselves and our children? Whatever happened to the days when the NDP believed in energy conservation—or at least they talked about it. When they were in office, they actually cut conservation programs, but at least they used to talk about it.

Today, they stand in this place, day after day, and criticize the important investments we're making in conservation, the important investments we're making that are allowing us to get off of dirty coal, create cleaner air and help ensure that we have healthier outcomes for ourselves and our children.

There's no question at all: The third party has lost their way. I can say that when I look at comments from the steelworkers, a group that used to support that party, comments that I'll be happy to speak to in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Victoria Morrison of Ajax tells me, "To live with the new rates under the smart meter plan, I will have to learn to sleep all day, getting up at 9 p.m. and going to bed at 7 a.m. If not, the cost of my meals and keeping warm, having light on a winter day, will cost me two to three times more."

Why are seniors like Ms. Morrison being hit with sky-high rates at exactly the time when they need to use electricity the most?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm still waiting to see the leader of the third party's next newsletter. I'm sure by now the leader of the third party is very aware of our energy and property tax credit, a tax credit that will go to two thirds of Ontario seniors, a tax credit that will go to 2.8 million lower- and middle-income Ontarians, a tax credit that's going to help provide relief when it comes to rising energy costs. I'm sure the leader of the third party would want her constituents to be aware of this important tax credit, because it does provide relief.

We know that Ontario families have gone through a rough time when it comes to the global recession, and we know that rising energy rates are challenging to Ontario families. That's why we're working very hard with Ontario families. We're working very hard with the Minister of Finance, who brought forward this energy property tax credit to provide relief.

We're going to keep working with Ontario families, but I would ask the leader of the third party to start dealing with facts and start ensuring that her—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Joyce Sloat and her husband are nearing retirement. She writes, "We have electric heat in our home.... I have been environmentally responsible by using a clothesline to dry our laundry for 36 years! [But] my pockets have bottoms and the McGuinty HST has them blowing in the wind!" This government has hit women like Joyce with hike after hike after hike. She doesn't want to pay the HST on hydro, and she certainly

doesn't want the money that she does pay going into the pockets of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Why is the Ontario government hitting her with higher rates the second she comes home from work and refusing to give her a break by simply taking the HST off her hydro bill?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I spoke earlier about the fact that our energy and property tax credits will be going out to the benefit of two thirds of Ontario seniors, and the very constituents that the leader of the third party is talking about will benefit from that.

But maybe the leader of the third party might want to take advice from her own critic, when he said not to "ignore the economic opportunities that are presented by conservation and renewable energy—not to mention the enormous costs if we do nothing. Science is not on their side. Nor is public opinion." I think that's something we would certainly agree with. The member's own critic is standing in stark contrast to the positions that she has taken in this Legislature day after day. She has lost her way. She's driving a wedge between herself and the environmentalists, she's driving a wedge between herself and the Steelworkers, and she's even driving a wedge between herself and her own environment critic.

SMART METERS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the energy minister. While Premier McGuinty sold his smart-meter experiment by telling Ontario families that time-of-use would save them money, 60% of those with smart meters say they're paying more. This morning, Ontario families woke up to discover that Premier McGuinty will make them pay even more for time-of-use rates that are the highest between 7 to 11 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m., when people are getting home from work. The Premier's advice to people who are struggling with skyrocketing hydro bills? Turn down the air conditioners this winter.

Why doesn't Premier McGuinty understand that Ontario families do not have an unlimited ability to pay for all of his expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I said it before, and I'm going to say it again, because it bears repeating: The Ontario Energy Board regulates the price of energy. They made it very clear a number of weeks ago, when they indicated that off-peak prices would be decreasing from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents, that mid-peak prices would be increasing—but it's very small, 8 cents to 8.1 cents—and on-peak prices would remain the same. The estimated bill impact for residential consumers for time-of-use would be going down—not up, but down—by \$1.21.

1100

Those are the facts. That's what consumers deserve to be hearing from the opposition. We welcome their constructive ideas. We've had to make some transformational changes in the energy sector because we've had to shift it from the distress it was in when they were in power to building a strong, reliable and clean energy system. We still have more work to do, and certainly we

would welcome constructive ideas, but the petty things that they're coming up with now—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: These are important issues. Our PC leader has called for Ontario families to be given a choice between flat-rate hydro use and time-of-use pricing. When you add the cost of smart meters, delivery charges, debt retirement charges, regulatory charges and global adjustment in HST to the 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour Premier McGuinty charges during peak hours, Ontario families pay substantially more for hydro than in California and Florida, where families are given a choice.

When will Premier McGuinty realize he does not have a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families and give them a real break on their skyrocketing hydro bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The opposition continues to put out information and comments that are just designed for fearmongering. Let's stick to the facts. The fact is that the Ontario Energy Board came forward with what amounts to a decrease of \$1.21 per month when it comes to consumers. That's good news for consumers.

We know that there's still work to do. We know there are still investments to be made. We're going to ensure that we don't do what they did seven years ago. We're not going to leave consumers in the lurch, where they didn't have enough power to provide the support they need in their households for their families. We're going to ensure that we continue to make investments in the system that ensure we have a reliable system, unlike the system that they left us seven years ago that was in an absolute state of decay. We're going to ensure that we don't do what they did, and that is to let the use of coal go up 127% during their days in office. By the year 2014—

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. A few months ago, a Toronto server, who was being forced to share her tips with her manager, asked the minister to change the law to protect her and thousands of other servers across Ontario who are being ripped off.

The minister responded, and I quote him, "Tips are not wages. The manner in which tips are split between employees and employers is determined by the two parties."

In view of the unanimous support given by MPPs in this House on Thursday and editorial support on Bill 114, will the Minister of Labour now tell us whether he still supports the rip-off of servers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First, I'd like to thank the member for introducing his private member's bill and allowing all members here to engage in this very important debate.

I think I speak for all of us when I say that our waiters and waitresses, our bartenders and hostesses do an amazing job, a commendable job for our hospitality industry. These are good, hard-working men and women. The type

of service they provide—having spoken to many different establishments, managers and owners understand that having competent, caring and well-compensated staff is the equation to success when it comes to any of the businesses within this industry.

I'm very proud of the record of this government when it comes to protecting our employees. We've made many changes to the Employment Standards Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister just doesn't get it. Tens of thousands of restaurant workers in Ontario are being ripped off by their bosses. They're forced, under pain of losing their jobs, to pay with their tips. We learned that this situation is spreading, and more and more workers will face this extortion if we don't put the brakes on this practice right now.

Will this government do the right thing to protect all low-wage servers and immediately take steps to ensure the swift passage of Bill 114, or, in the alternative, bring in your own bill to do the same?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We take the rights of hard-working men and women in Ontario very seriously. Again, that's why we have made significant changes to the Employment Standards Act.

If any restaurant employee, hotel employee, any employee in Ontario feels that they have been mistreated, I do ask that they contact the Ministry of Labour so our officials can investigate.

I think the member fails to remember that after nine long years of not seeing one cent added to the minimum wage, this party has increased that minimum wage every single year to—right now in Ontario, where those members voted against that, we have the highest minimum wage of any province in Canada. It's something that we're proud of. We will continue to fight for the workers of Ontario.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Energy. Clean, renewable hydroelectricity is an important part of Ontario's energy supply mix. In northern Ontario, water in particular is an essential source of electricity needed to power our communities, industry, hospitals and schools.

Many of the more remote communities would not have power at all if not for the investments being made to enhance our hydroelectric generating capacity in the north.

Can the minister reaffirm the government's commitment to hydroelectricity as a critical element in powering northern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for the question. I can assure him of this government's commitment to clean, renewable hydro power and our commitment to continuing to invest in energy reliability in northern Ontario.

In fact, I can tell him of an exciting new development on the Upper Mattagami River near Timmins. Ontario

Power Generation has been wanting to refurbish and enhance the aging hydro infrastructure on the Mattagami River for quite some time. Some of it was approaching 100 years old.

Just last week, thanks to the investments made by this government, the fully refurbished and enhanced Sandy Falls hydro station came into service. This new hydro station will produce 30 kilowatt hours of clean, renewable energy every year, enough to power 3,000 homes in northeastern Ontario.

Revitalizing Sandy Falls is just one of a number of large hydro projects under way on the Mattagami River. I'm happy to expand on that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Getting power to the communities in the north is vital and certainly no small undertaking; even better when the power can be produced locally and renewably.

It is well known that the investments the government is making in modernizing the electricity system and enhancing our generating capacity from clean, renewable resources like hydroelectricity are creating thousands of jobs across Ontario.

Can the minister tell the House: In terms of jobs, what sort of impact do these projects have on northern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm glad the member brought up job creation, because, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party, it's something that we care very greatly about, especially in the north.

I can tell the member that the development on the Upper Mattagami River, including Sandy Falls, is creating 500 jobs in northern Ontario. The expansions taking place on the Lower Mattagami River are creating 800 jobs. That's 1,300 jobs in Timmins-James Bay on the Mattagami River alone.

Not once have I heard the member from Timmins-James Bay or his leader utter a single word about the importance of these jobs in that community.

The leader of the third party clearly is not interested in job creation, opportunities for First Nations or energy reliability in the north. She's interested in two things: fearmongering and short-term political opportunity, and putting that ahead of cleaner air and job creation in the north. Ontarians deserve much better than that.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. In response to a media interview last week, one of your colleagues demonstrated how out of touch your colleagues are in regard to your portfolio. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is so out of touch—

Interjection: How out of touch is she?

Mr. Robert Bailey: —that last week in a media interview, she said cutting the HST for everyone would only help the rich, who can afford this tax. That's news to Ontario families, who work hard every day and are struggling to pay the \$1,000 a year the HST adds to their family bills.

Was the member relying on talking points from your office for her out-of-touch comments, or were they really her own?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member very much for the question. First, let me just say how great a job our member from Lambton-Kent does. The member as well as the government—we are here about creating jobs. That's why we introduced the HST. That's why we have a comprehensive tax package. In fact, while we know 93% of all Ontarians have seen a personal income tax cut, we know that we are helping Ontario families with tax cuts and tax credits. It's about more jobs for Ontarians, it's about building a stronger economy, and we are committed to continue going on that road.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: My supplementary to the minister: Obviously, the McGuinty Liberals also show how out of touch they are when this same member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex tried to say that the federal government made her and her colleagues vote for the HST. Ontario families know that she and 70 other McGuinty Liberals put the Premier's priorities over their own. They are unhappy about paying \$1,000 a year more for the HST. Now you're scrambling to come up with gimmicks to ease the pain of Premier McGuinty's HST tax grabs.

But if anyone needed more proof of how out of touch you've become, you expect to be thanked for taking away \$1,000 and then giving Ontario families \$50 back. How did you and your Liberal colleagues get so far out of touch?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Again, I wonder if the member had the opportunity to speak with Patricia Davidson, the federal MP from Sarnia, who I think voted for the HST. She voted for the HST. That's a smart member.

But let me talk a little bit more about our comprehensive tax package. It's about creating jobs; that's what we are committed to. It's about tax cuts. It's about tax credits. It's about building a business environment that is competitive. We want our businesses to succeed so that they can have more money to put into innovation and more jobs. That's what this is about, and I hope the member would support building on 600,000 more jobs for the province of Ontario.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in 2008—October 2008, in fact—your government passed legislation that gave part-time professors and support staff the right to organize. Minister Milloy, in the committee of estimates, said that he was very proud of this legislation. Indeed, many ministers are nodding in their pride of having passed that legislation two years ago.

Yet today, more than a year after thousands of workers signed membership cards and voted on unionization, the

ballots remain in sealed boxes, uncounted. What happened to that pride of yours that you had in passing that legislation? When will the ballots be counted?

Hon. John Milloy: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know the member knows, or ought to know, that this is before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The Ontario Labour Relations Board, as a tribunal, will work through this process, working with the parties, assisting the parties with this.

The Ministry of Labour is very proud of the labour relations that we have in Ontario. They have been very effective. Actually, right now in Ontario, we have the best labour relations record that we have had in the last 35 years. That speaks volumes for the way that the parties handle themselves.

But whenever there is a dispute, when there is something that parties cannot see eye to eye on, we do have the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and this is where this matter sits today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Both ministers are abdicating their responsibility. In my mind, it doesn't speak to the pride in the bill that his government passed. The colleges are, in my mind, violating your bill. They are flouting your bill; your bill is being circumvented by the colleges.

Frankly, both of these ministers are a little coy. Minister Milloy, in particular, is very modest about his authority. According to another act, the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, the minister has the authority to simply order the colleges to withdraw their objections to the vote. Here's a way for the minister to restore pride in his bill and take responsibility. Will Minister Milloy make the order and end this debacle?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As Minister of Labour, I take my responsibilities very seriously, and I respect the process that we have in the province of Ontario. The process allows the parties, if they have a dispute, if they have a conflict or something that needs to be worked through, to take that to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. That's where the matter sits today. I would hope that the member would not play politics with this and would allow the process to work itself through.

In this province, we have very stable labour relations. We have excellent labour relations. I think that's because of the model that we've set up. Please allow the process to work its way through, I say to the member.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, Ottawa Centre includes Carleton University, has the University of Ottawa situated next door and has Algonquin College and La Cité collégiale within a very short distance. As such, I have many students who live in my riding, and my constituents are generally very attuned to the importance of post-secondary education as a key component of a prosperous and well-equipped Ontario.

Minister, I hear a lot from my community, and students especially, about rising tuition fees and their con-

cerns that post-secondary education is becoming unaffordable, especially for those with limited financial resources.

Can the minister assure my constituents that a post-secondary education, especially in this critical time as we see such a strong need for skilled workers in the 21st-century economy, remains accessible to those with limited financial means but also affordable for those who are making a smart investment in their future?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for a very important question and for his advocacy on behalf of post-secondary education, particularly students and their families.

I'm very, very proud that Ontario boasts one of the most generous student assistance programs in the country. This spring, we announced further enhancements and an expansion of the program, totalling some \$81 million. I've had an opportunity to go out and meet with student groups who have been very receptive to the changes.

Just to share with the Legislature what some of these changes are: Under the new plan, we provided more assistance for tuition, living costs, book supplies and equipment; we're allowing students to keep more of the money they earn from part-time jobs; we're providing a no-interest, no-payment period on student loans for six months after graduation; we're providing additional support for married students and students with children; and we've introduced a new grant for part-time students. As well—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I think it is valuable for us to consider another factor in this discussion, one that I feel is equally important to those engaged in or looking forward to a post-secondary education. It is important to consider the enhanced educational experience our students are getting because of massive investments in the facilities and classrooms of our colleges and universities. It's obvious that a learner in a modern and well-equipped facility will ultimately benefit more than a learner using an outdated, crowded or dilapidated setting. There's little doubt that students are savvy consumers. They know when they get value for their dollar.

Minister, could you tell us what investments our government has been making in improving the learning environment in Ontario's colleges and universities and how this will continue to enhance the value of a post-secondary education in the new economy of the 21st century?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is correct: The bricks-and-mortar side of the equation is equally important. Our 2010 budget confirmed the provincial investment of some \$780 million over two years to help upgrade and build new facilities at our colleges and universities.

For the Ottawa area, which the member is proud to represent, I'm sure he's aware that in 2009, as part of this funding, our government provided over \$26 million to Carleton University's interdisciplinary academic build-

ing. The University of Ottawa received \$50 million in provincial funding for the Vanier Hall renovation and tower addition. In addition, Algonquin College received \$35 million for their Environmental Demonstration Centre for Construction Trades and Building Bridges, and La Cité collégiale received \$13 million for their Emergency Services Training Centre 911 Institute. These are all great examples of investments which are paying off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PLANT CLOSURE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Acting Premier: On September 30, I encouraged the Premier to pick up the phone and to call Smucker's after news that the company would be closing its Bick's Dunnville processing facility as well as its Delhi tank farm. These closures will devastate the town of Dunnville, as well as farmers who grow cucumbers, peppers, beets, onions, cauliflower and tomatoes.

1120

It's been a month. Has your Premier made the call to Smucker? Has he picked up the phone to talk to other food processors who may be interested in this state-of-the-art tank farm and the processing facility? My question, Acting Premier: What progress is being made on this?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you very much for the question. The McGuinty government understands that any plant closing has a significant impact on both the employees' family and community. We continue to support improved competitiveness in Ontario's food and processing sector. We have made significant investments through our rural economic development program, and we continue to work with the growth and expansion through our Open Ontario plan.

I look forward to even further expanding on the investments that we have made with our processors, specifically in rural Ontario and the conversations that we have had. But I want to assure the member from across the way that we have been on the ground working in the past and we are working today. Those calls have been made.

I'm very proud of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, Minister of Agriculture, this reminds me of what your McGuinty government allowed to happen in 2008 with the peach and pear canning operations in St. Davids. CanGro closed shop after more than 100 years because they discovered that in McGuinty Ontario, it's more efficient to can fruit from China.

Back to Smucker: Are you offering assistance through the rural economic development fund or your so-called job creation funds? In the last year, your government has sat by while hard-working people in my area have been kicked in the teeth, not only by Smucker but by two separate, massive labour disruptions at US Steel, a lock-

out at the former Heckett and plans to close down OPG Nanticoke.

How do you expect hard-working families in Haldimand-Norfolk to survive when you oversee these massive job losses, or do you just not care anymore?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I just want to say that there could not be anything further from the truth. We understand how significantly it does affect the community and, specifically, the employees.

I want to say that \$290 million was invested in the food processing sector. We understand how critical it is. It's the second-largest industry in Ontario, and that's why those investments have been made. I want to speak specifically to the \$290 million. That has retained and created 6,200 jobs. I am very proud of the investment that we have made on this side of the House. We know that there was not the investment made from that side of the House.

We recognize there's more work to do, and that, quite frankly, is why we have the Open Ontario plan. The investments have been made in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Middlesex Power Distribution customers in the Dutton area are seeing red. They're facing a double whammy of hikes in hydro bills: Next year, they're going to be paying more as a result of the new time-of-use billing, and today, they're going to be whacked after the Ontario Energy Board approved the 16% increase to the distribution portion of their hydro bill.

Why won't the minister give Dutton-area families a break by taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Here we go again: the leader of the third party getting up and not supporting investments that are being made in infrastructure.

Yes, we know that energy prices are going up, and they're going up because local distribution companies have had to put greater investments in their infrastructure to ensure the reliability of the systems right across Ontario. One of the reasons they have to do that—and the leader of the third party may know it—is because the Tories froze prices back when they were in power. Those investments could not be made, so many of these local distribution companies are still playing catch-up.

But I suggest that the leader of the third party, before she gets up again, listen to the steelworkers of Ontario when they said this: "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy...."

These are important investments that are being made across this province, investments that the old NDP would have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The hydro bill spike that Dutton-area families are facing is just plain unfair, especially

as the cold weather arrives, and the McGuinty HST adds insult to injury. Families in the Dutton area—in fact, families all across this province—deserve a break.

This afternoon, the McGuinty government can support the NDP's motion to take the HST off hydro. Will the minister commit to hard-hit families in Dutton and elsewhere in the province that this government will vote for the motion that we're debating this afternoon?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think once again, the leader of the third party needs to inform her constituents of what's being done to mitigate many of the increases that are taking place.

Whether it's the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which is going to two thirds of Ontario seniors and 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians across this province, whether it's the 93% of Ontarians who are receiving income tax cuts in the range of about an average of \$200 per family, a number of measures have been taken through tax credits and income tax cuts to ensure that we mitigate those initiatives.

But what the leader of the opposition needs to do is ensure that her constituents know how important the investments we're making are in ensuring that we build a strong, reliable and clean energy system. That's what she's forgotten; that's what her constituents deserve to know. She should come clean with her constituents and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As part of the Georgetown South expansion project, GO is building a tunnel in the Weston community. The local community has been supportive of this tunnel, as it is a significant part of the improvements that have been made to the original project. The Weston community will also benefit from a new GO station, increased GO service and access to the air-rail link.

Last Thursday, I participated with constituents in an open house organized by Metrolinx to consult the community on the design of the Weston tunnel. At the meeting, concerns were expressed about possible changes to the tunnel.

Could the minister please update my constituents on the status of the tunnelling project—have there been any changes?—and provide assurance that community members will continue to be fully informed as construction proceeds?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member opposite for her advocacy. She has been a real champion for her community, and many of the improvements have been made because she's worked so closely with us.

In fact, over the summer, I was able to go and look at the project with the member for York South-Weston and we were able to see the positive impact of this project on the community.

Since the summer, because of her advocacy and because of her work with us, Metrolinx has been involved

in changing the way they communicate with the community. There's been extensive community engagement. To date, two community offices have been opened, Strachan and Weston, with on-site staff to answer questions. A regular e-news bulletin goes out to update community members; 10,000 flyers have been delivered to neighbourhood homes; and just last week, as the member opposite said, there was a community meeting to talk about the tunnel.

Metrolinx will continue to communicate with the community, and the member opposite will work on that with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: As part of the design process for the Weston tunnel, last week nine homeowners in the village of Weston received a letter from Metrolinx that caused them much concern. The letter indicated that as part of the construction of the tunnel, the properties would be acquired.

Some of the affected constituents, whom I visited and talked to personally, expressed the strong desire not to leave the community. To put it in their own words, their property represents much more than just a residence. It is their home, where they've lived for 20, 30 years. They've raised their families, built relationships and made friends.

Just last Thursday, the minister committed to having Metrolinx contact the affected homeowners to discuss their options. Can the minister tell us whether Metrolinx will be in touch in writing with my constituents about options and next steps?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm really happy to be able to clarify the situation. Over the weekend, a follow-up letter, which did clarify what was happening, was handed to all of the affected homeowners. A member of the GO Transit community relations team spoke personally with the majority of the affected homeowners. As with similar situations, GO Transit will be communicating in writing the specific options available to each homeowner. I know you understand that each situation will be somewhat different, but each homeowner needs to get those options in writing, and as the situations evolve, that will happen.

1130

I want to assure the member and the House that the homeowners in question will have ample opportunity to talk about their personal circumstances with GO Transit, and we've clarified that. As I've said earlier, it's critical to us that community engagement be an ongoing part of what GO and Metrolinx do in this community. That's what's happening.

As I've said, they'll be communicating to each homeowner in writing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: In June of this year, I alerted the minister to the fact that

a Scarborough Toyota dealership had issued a safety certificate signed by the dealership's mechanic, even though subsequent independent inspections confirmed that the vehicle was unfit and should never have been issued a safety certificate. Despite the evidence, the ministry claims that it is unable to pursue the issue because of a six-month statute of limitations on Highway Traffic Act charges.

I trust the minister will agree that this is an unacceptable response. Will she agree to direct her ministry staff to fully investigate this matter, to ensure the integrity of the safety standards certificate process in our province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, I appreciate the member opposite bringing forward his concerns. I can't comment on an individual case. I know he understands that.

The motor vehicle inspection program has been in place for many years, before 2003. I believe the member opposite was a Minister of Transportation at one point.

The reality is that if there are mechanics and garages out there that are not following the rules, then obviously there are laws in place to deal with that.

We recognize that there needs to be oversight. We've established a call centre where consumers can contact us with their complaints about garages. We're making sure that mechanics actually have the credentials that they're telling us they have. If we can't verify their credentials, we won't let them issue safety standard certificates. So we've taken action to deal with some of the issues that the member opposite is raising.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Actually, the reason I'm raising the question is because the ministry is refusing to take action.

There are two serious issues here. First of all, we have a car dealership that is issuing certificates fraudulently. The integrity of the entire inspection system is at stake here. But the more important issue is that the ministry is unwilling to pursue the matter and is apparently content to simply allow this dealership and others, obviously, to continue to do business in an inappropriate manner.

How can the minister justify her ministry's washing their hands of this issue? Will she agree to order a full investigation into this case and the dealership's business practices, and also order a comprehensive review of the entire system in this province that is being used under the safety standards certificate process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Garages that break the law can be fined up to \$20,000 and have their licences revoked. There are already very stiff penalties in place. It's a regime of—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the second phone that has gone off. I'd just ask members to make sure—they should be.

Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a regime of regulation and legislation that is very rigorous, and as I said, the member opposite is very aware of it because he was a Minister of Transportation and these rules have been in place since before 2003.

As I said before, I cannot comment on a specific case. I will certainly take the issue under advisement. I appreciate him raising it again.

In Ontario, we have some of the safest roads in North America. The safety regime that we have in place is really second to none. I think that the member opposite raising questions about a specific case when there are rules in place, when the law is being followed, really only serves to undermine.

Thank you for raising it. I will certainly take it under advisement, but I think—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has told the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace that there will be no increase in their annual budget this year. At the same time, the landlord that owns the building that the community health centre works out of has told them there's going to be a 100% increase in the rent—a \$100,000-a-year increase in the rent.

In a small community health centre such as this, that means cutting two positions; that means cutting health services for the community of Ignace and Savant Lake. These communities have no other real option. Why is your government forcing the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre to cut health services in the community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be more than happy to look into the specifics of this situation. What I can tell you is that we have led the largest-ever expansion of community health centres across this province. It is a model that serves a very important niche in many communities. It is a model that has really served communities extremely well.

I will look at this particular situation, but to the best of my knowledge—I will undertake to look at the specifics of this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm asking the minister to do that because at the same time that your ministry is telling the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre there's no increase in their annual budget, your government, through the Ontario Realty Corp., is telling them you're going to raise the rent \$100,000 a year. One arm of the government says, "No increase in the budget"; the other arm of the government says, "We're going to increase your rent by \$100,000 a year."

I think any reasonable person would say that is absurd. You have to know this will force them to cut full-time services at the health care centre. You have to know that it's not an answer to go two and a half hours to Thunder Bay. They'd be told, "No doctors there."

What are you going to do to fix this absurd situation, where your government is forcing them to cut health care services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said to the member opposite, I will look into this particular situation and find out what is actually going on there.

One thing we do know for sure is, when the NDP was in power they cut medical school spots by 13%. Thanks to the action of that government—and the member opposite was sitting around the table at the time—we've lost 228 potential doctors, 568 overall. We have done exactly the opposite. We've expanded medical school spaces. In fact, we built a new medical school in the north that is training doctors today to support the north tomorrow.

Last week I was very pleased to announce we've now added one million Ontarians to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members of the House to wish the Leader of the Opposition a happy birthday today. Happy Birthday.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches—East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the practice of tip-outs. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand—Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs concerning Smucker's closing the Dunnville processing and Delhi tank farm. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROBERT RUNCIMAN

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm proud to rise today to recognize a man who certainly needs no introduction in this chamber. On Thursday, I will attend the Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce awards night, where it will be my honour to present Senator Bob Runciman with the organization's 2010 Citizen of the Year Award. It's a long-overdue recognition for a man whose service to the community spans more than three decades. In that time, Senator Runciman has often, without any publicity, worked to make Brockville and Leeds—Grenville a better place for all of us.

As a former member of his staff, I know that Bob didn't care if he got any credit for helping an important project get finished. He just wanted it done and wouldn't rest until it was. Typically, he shied away from any personal glory upon learning he'd even earned the chamber's award, telling a reporter that his first thought was that his late father, Sandy, really deserved it.

As you know, Senator Runciman spent 29 years on both sides of this chamber, where his reputation as a tenacious debater and skilled orator won him the respect of all MPPs from all parties. Since being appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the red chamber is getting used to the mad dog we all know and love.

I'm sure my colleagues here at Queen's Park will join me in congratulating Bob and his wife, Jeannette, on this most deserved honour.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Paul Miller: I first want to congratulate all of the successful candidates in last Monday's province-wide municipal elections and thank every candidate for making the commitment to run for elected office.

In Hamilton, we have a new mayor, Bob Bratina, and some new city councillors, including, from my riding of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Brenda Johnson, the new councillor for ward 11, and Alex Johnstone, the new trustee for wards 11 and 12.

I'm very pleased to offer my special congratulations to the new public school trustee for ward 5, Todd White, who is my constituency assistant. Todd ran an extremely well-organized campaign, knocking on every door in ward 5. He did an excellent job and deserves this win, which is an even bigger win for the parents and school-children of ward 5.

In this time of excessive job losses and economic downturn, I'm looking forward to working with the new city council to bring new industry and new employment programs to Hamilton. We have lots of work ahead of us, and our collaborative efforts will be needed to start Hamilton turning that economic recovery corner.

SUMMERSTOWN TRAILS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to announce that Summerstown Trails in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has received a provincial grant of \$36,515 through the healthy communities funding. This fund plays a key role in helping the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport achieve its vision of healthy communities working together and Ontarians leading healthy and active lives.

The Summerstown Trails were constructed over 30 years ago by the Ministry of Natural Resources and have been enjoyed in all seasons by cross-country skiers, hikers and bikers.

With the recent funding, Summerstown Trails will be purchasing 28 pairs of children's snowshoes and 38 pairs of cross-country skis, boots and poles, as well as 10 pairs

of adults' snowshoes. Their goal is to introduce cross-country skiing to children in the hope that they will continue the activity as adults.

I wish to congratulate ski enthusiasts Iris and Stanley Swerdfeger for their extraordinary volunteer work at the Summerstown trail in their community of South Glengarry. It is through their work with the township and others, and a handful of local volunteers, that the trails have been properly maintained and groomed since they were created.

The funding will also help to fund new grooming equipment and a new snowmobile to replace two aging machines.

The October 22 announcement displays the commitment the McGuinty government has for the health and well-being of citizens of eastern Ontario, my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and indeed all Ontarians.

XOGEN TECHNOLOGIES INC.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate Xogen Technologies in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon for being named one of four finalists for the Mind to Market Award.

The Mind to Market Award is presented annually to recognize outstanding research collaboration between industry and an academic research team that results in successful commercialization.

Xogen Technologies, based in Orangeville, has a patented technology that treats raw waste water using an electric process that not only eliminates biosolids but also requires a much smaller footprint than conventional treatment approaches, thereby lowering capital costs. As a by-product, the process produces a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen gas that can be used to generate energy through combustion or a fuel cell, energy that can be sold back to the grid or reused to help further reduce costs. Their patented technology has attracted international interest, with inquiries coming from Washington, Seattle and Malaysia.

Xogen has made a point of keeping jobs local, as all of the technicians they have hired have been from the Orangeville area.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to meet with Xogen's CEO, Angella Hughes, and had a tour of their facility. I was impressed with their innovation and goal to bring more jobs to the community.

I'd like to again congratulate the management team and the board of directors for being one of the four outstanding organizations nominated for this prestigious award.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: Just recently, I was ecstatic to hear that Ontario has hit an important milestone: one million more being served by a family doctor than had access in 2003. That is the equivalent of finding a doctor for 16 people every hour, which was not the case under the previous Conservative government.

Today, 94% of Ontarians over the age of 16 have a family doctor. In order to do this, the McGuinty government has increased investments in health care.

We have hired 21% more internationally trained doctors and have created 10,000 new nursing positions.

We have expanded our MedsCheck program by adding three new programs for seniors, long-term-care residents and those with diabetes.

We have built new hospitals like the one in Sioux Lookout, which will provide essential health services and create 300 new jobs.

These outstanding statistics did not exist under the previous government, and they will disappear because, if elected, the Leader of the Opposition has a plan to cut \$3 billion from front-line health care annually.

Ontario families understand that when it comes to health care, there's only one party that has been clear and unwavering in support of our publicly funded health care system, and that is the McGuinty government and Ontario Liberals.

1310

LANDFILL

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very proud to say that a large part of my riding of Durham is made up of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt and is home to many gravel pits that have provided aggregate for Ontario and the GTA for decades.

One specific concern in my riding today is located at site 13471 on Lakeridge Road, the border between Uxbridge and Port Perry, where, despite a stop-work order issued by the township of Scugog, the company Earthworx has continued to bring in commercial fill. The municipality simply lacks the resources to police the site appropriately.

Now that many of these sites have been abandoned or emptied, owners are turning to commercial fill operations to fill them back up, or site reclamation. Communities in my riding are looking for a new economy and opportunities. They want to do the right thing but do not want to become a dumping ground for contaminated fill.

This is an issue where the Minister of the Environment has a very important role to perform. The worry is the lack of enforcement and that contaminated fill may be mixed with clean fill in order to, if you will, distort the soil testing that's being done.

I have spoken directly with and have called on the Minister of the Environment and this government to examine the issues surrounding the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt, not just in words but actions, surrounding commercial fill operations, and to set up proper guidelines to ensure residents no longer have to worry about the groundwater being contaminated by inappropriate activities on the moraine.

ACTION ONTARIO

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Chronic pain affects nearly 20% of Ontarians, and 60% of those are over the age of 65.

Today, I had the opportunity to meet with members of Action Ontario, as have many of my colleagues. I would like to welcome Action Ontario, which is here for their inaugural Queen's Park day to increase awareness about chronic pain.

Action is an innovative, non-profit organization made up of doctors, researchers, health care professionals and patients committed to seeing improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of Ontarians who suffer from neuropathic pain and other forms of chronic pain.

Neuropathic pain destroys careers, relationships and even the will to live. Its direct impact on health care costs is estimated to now exceed \$250 million annually, with a broader impact on lost income and productivity estimated at several billion dollars per year.

On November 9, during National Pain Awareness Week, Action will be holding their national symposium at the MaRS Centre with a theme of patient input for system change, and I encourage all members to attend.

I would like to especially thank Dr. Angela Mailis-Gagnon, a constituent of mine and the chairperson of Action Ontario, for her hard work and dedication to this organization. On behalf of the government, I want to extend a sincere thank you to all volunteers at Action Ontario for the work they are doing on behalf of Ontarians suffering from pain.

CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: The Canadian Museum of Nature, a landmark in my riding, has been celebrating the centennial year of its historic Victoria Memorial Museum building. The institution itself is approaching its 155th anniversary in 2011, but "The Castle," as it's known, has been a truly special part of my community and a special place for our nation these last 100 years.

For the last six years, this remarkable building has been undergoing extensive renovations and just this spring has reopened fully for the public to enjoy.

I say that this building is an important part of our heritage because many people may not be familiar with one of the building's earliest tenants, and that was Canada's Parliament. On a bitter cold February 3, 1916, a massive fire destroyed the Centre Block of Parliament. By the afternoon of February 4, the members of Parliament were back at work in the atrium of the museum and would work there, along with the Senate, for four years.

It's important to note some key points of our history that took place there. The First World War acts instituting conscription, as well as a certain temporary measure called the Income Tax Act, were passed there. The act granting voting rights for women, a key point in our history, was debated and passed there in 1918. In 1919, one of our greatest Prime Ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, laid there in state.

Congratulations to the museum's leadership: Maureen Dougan, interim president and CEO; Michel Houle, interim VP and COO; and Irene Byrne, the board secretary,

and of course the many people who work there and make it a special place.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bill Mauro: The municipal elections have come and gone and I want to offer my thanks and congratulations to all of those who allowed their names to stand on the ballot, including mayor-elect Rob Ford and all the councillors here in Toronto.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, we're home to one of only two mass transit manufacturing plants in all of Canada, that being the Bombardier plant in the Westfort part of my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. There's been a tremendous amount of good news there in the last little while: \$3.5 billion worth of contracts, \$1.6 million of that being provincial government funding, as well as about \$9.5 billion that we've announced for infrastructure in Ontario.

Additionally, my riding has received about \$10 million in gas funding from the province, committed to mass transit improvements. I know the city of Toronto has received somewhere in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars.

My point is this: In 2009, along with the Premier, I announced a \$1.2-billion streetcar contract at the Bombardier plant in my riding, \$400-million-plus of that being provincial—no federal money in that. There has now been public speculation that this particular contract might be reviewed and potentially reconsidered.

It's my hope that, as the GTA continues to expand and prepares for the Pan Am Games, the new mayor and council in the city of Toronto will have regard for the commitments made to mass transit by our government and that they will have regard for the abilities of the management and the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding at the Bombardier plant to deliver the finest mass transit vehicles in the world and to meet their contractual obligations.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on bridge inspection and maintenance from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As you know, the public accounts committee considers recommendations of the Auditor General, whose report came out in December 2009. In March 2010, the committee decided to call in front of it the Deputy Minister of Transportation to ask about the constructive criticisms that the auditor made with regard to the inspection of our bridges across the province of Ontario.

It's interesting to note that there are 14,800 bridges in the province of Ontario. Of these, approximately 12,000 fall under the responsibility of Ontario's 444 municipalities. The other 2,800 are under our provincial highway system.

We make some recommendations and ask the Deputy Minister of Transportation to respond to us with their oversight with regard to the provincial bridges, those 2,800 bridges.

However, there was a great deal of concern by the committee members with regard to the other bridges, the 12,000 bridges under municipal control. That's because some very small and poor municipalities, in terms of their financial capability, have, in some instances, a large number of bridges. These municipalities are typically in the north and in the remote areas of the eastern part of our province as well.

Some of the recommendations ask the ministry what it is doing with regard to the inspection of those bridges. While the municipalities have the responsibility for these bridges, it's of our concern that they just do not have the financial capability of properly inspecting them and properly repairing them. So we asked the ministry to work with the municipalities to create some kind of system where there would be uniformity across the province of Ontario, where municipalities could measure and inspect their bridges.

As well, we asked the ministry whether or not, when they were allocating funds for infrastructure work with municipalities, they would consider doing it on a priority basis once a good system has been set up to establish where the most dangerous problems lie.

I believe it's a very constructive report to the Ministry of Education, and I notice the Minister of Education is here—

Mr. John O'Toole: Transportation.

1320

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Sorry—as she then was. I notice the Minister of Transportation is here with us today, and I say to the minister: I would be more than willing to sit down with her, as I've offered to other ministers, to go over the report. I believe it's got some very constructive suggestions to you.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EXOTIC WILDLIFE IN CAPTIVITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ANIMAUX SAUVAGES EXOTIQUES GARDÉS EN CAPTIVITÉ

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 125, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: I would like to take just two seconds to introduce, from the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Melissa Matlow and Michelle Cliffe. We thank them for being here.

From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, by adding a new part III.1 that provides rules concerning the keeping of exotic wildlife in captivity.

Some of the highlights of the part:

People are prohibited from keeping exotic wildlife in captivity unless they hold a licence to do so—see section 47.2 of the act.

Those that keep exotic wildlife in captivity must ensure that the wildlife are not released and that they do not escape. If exotic wildlife does escape or is released, those who kept them in captivity are generally responsible for recapturing them—section 47.3 of the act.

Part III.1 of the act must read as being consistent with the regulation 60/09 standards of care under the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and any regulation made under the act concerning exotic wildlife must be consistent with that regulation—section 47.7 of the act.

A provision of a municipal bylaw prevails over part III.1 to the extent that it prohibits the keeping of exotic wildlife or is otherwise more restrictive than the provision of part III.1 or a regulation made for the purposes of that part—section 47.8 of the act.

The act is amended to permit the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations with respect to exotic animals—section 112 of the act.

The short title is the Exotic Wildlife in Captivity Act.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas, in March 2007, the McGuinty government announced that the eastward extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115 would be completed"—here's the important part—"by 2013; and

"Whereas the commitment was contained in a signed contract between the federal government and the McGuinty government dated March 2, 2007; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has recently announced that the eastward extension of the 407 will end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa; and

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will mean added traffic congestion on smaller rural roads in northern Oshawa which are not equipped to handle the volume of traffic entering the highway; and

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will have significant negative effects on commuters, business, tourism, agriculture, public transit and all the citizens of Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario and Premier McGuinty take all and any necessary steps to complete the 407 eastward extension to Highway 35/115 in a single stage, in accordance with the original signed agreement with the federal government."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Taron Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Taron Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Taron Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Taron agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Taron and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I clearly agree with this, will affix my signature and send it with Bridget to the table.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I've received this petition from a Mr. Diaz, and it's to the Parliament of Ontario and the

minister responsible for senior citizens. It's about minimum allowances for caregivers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Since I agree, I'm signing my signature to it.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the petition and I applaud my seatmate, MPP Bailey. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Carina.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table with Ffion.

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HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is in support of Bill 100.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users...; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to the page to take to the table.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table with Jonathan.

**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with the petition. I'll affix my signature and send it down with Nicholas.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, in March of 2007, the McGuinty government announced that the eastward extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115 would be completed in 2013;

"Whereas this commitment was contained in a contract between the federal government and the McGuinty government dated March 2, 2007;

"Whereas the McGuinty government has recently announced that the eastward extension of the 407 will end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa;

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will mean added traffic congestion on smaller rural roads in north Oshawa, which are not equipped to handle the volume of traffic exiting and entering the highway;

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit and all citizens of Durham region;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario take all necessary steps to complete the 407 eastward extension to Highway 35/115 in a single stage in accordance with their agreement with the federal government."

I'm certainly in agreement with this. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table.

**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is regarding provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Dundas county in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table.

OPPOSITION DAY

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty govern-

ment to immediately remove the HST from all hydro bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to bring this motion to the Legislature today and to begin the debate on it. It is a very simple motion. It barely even takes up two lines in our order paper today. The reason it's a very simple motion is because it simply asks the government to take the HST off hydro, something that can be done very quickly, very easily to provide a whole bunch of relief to the people of this province who are simply unable to keep up with the day-to-day costs of everyday living.

The HST is something the New Democrats disagreed with from day one. We did that consistently here in the Ontario Legislature, as did our federal leader at the national level.

But when it comes to what this government has done, particularly in terms of the hydro system in this province, people are telling me, from one end of Ontario to the other, that they simply cannot pay their hydro bills anymore. This government has made decisions that are driving the cost of hydro through the roof and is not acknowledging, not paying attention, not listening to the people of this province, who are saying they simply cannot afford to pay their bills anymore.

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This government has systematically brought forward initiatives while not being concerned at all about the impact that's going to have on people's pocketbooks.

No matter where I go in Ontario, whether I'm in Thunder Bay, Windsor, London or Sudbury, everybody is telling me the same thing: They simply cannot afford their hydro bills. The bills are going up at a pace that cannot be met by the people of this province.

I'm talking to all kinds of different people. I'm talking to people who are senior citizens. I'm talking to people who are young families, who are families with young children. I'm talking to people who are just regular working folks who are trying to make ends meet and who have seen an enormous spike in their hydro bills.

The government likes to pretend that in fact there's nothing they can do about this, that this is all about—what's their favourite refrain?—keeping the lights on, modernizing our infrastructure. This is one of their favourite little phrases: "We're modernizing the infrastructure. The opposition simply doesn't want to admit that that has to be done."

What the government doesn't want to admit is that they have the ability to take 8%—the salt that is in the wounds of your hydro bills—off of the bill. The government can do that, and they need to do it today. That 8% doesn't do a single thing. That 8% doesn't contribute at all to the infrastructure that the government likes to talk about. So they are trying to have it both ways. They are trying to pretend, first of all, that their decisions were the right ones, the decisions that are driving those bills up, and I'll get to that in a moment. But then they're trying to pretend, they're trying to pull the wool over your eyes, to

say to people that in fact this 8% is going to have some impact on that very infrastructure work, and we know it isn't. That 8% is going directly into the government coffers and then very quickly out the door to huge corporate tax giveaways.

This is not the way to run a province, by burdening everyday folks with huge increases in their hydro bills, making it impossible for them to be able to stay warm in the winter, keep their lights on and do their everyday functions, and at the same time shoving that money out the door to corporations that are not guaranteeing anything in terms of job creation and investment in this province.

Shame on the Liberal government. What wrong-headed policies. What wrong-headed road are they taking us down?

I want to talk about some policies. This government has put in place a number of initiatives that are simply wrong-headed when it comes to our hydro system, when it comes to our electricity system in the province of Ontario.

I hearken to the one that's so irritating for many folks that they talk to me about it regularly: a \$7-billion, behind-closed-doors, sole-source negotiated contract with our former energy minister and Samsung.

This is the government that refused to even allow our public generation system, the public utility that generates electricity in Ontario, to participate in the green energy initiatives of this province. Shame on them. Why would they do that? I don't know why they would do that. We think that was the wrong thing to do. Instead, they sole-sourced this \$7-billion scheme with Samsung—shame on them—while not letting the public interest come to the fore in terms of provision of energy in this province.

What else did they do? Everybody knows, because today the time-of-use pricing is starting, right? Today, people get their time-of-use pricing. So, of course, the other issue that we think was extremely wrong-headed was the implementation of the smart meter plan. We have said from day one that those not-so-smart meters—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Transportation. Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—were the wrong thing to do. New Democrats advised the government against it, but they went ahead blindly and now they've wasted \$1.5 billion on a not-so-smart meter plan that does what? It does nothing. It was supposed to help people conserve energy. It's not doing that. It was supposed to help people reduce their electricity costs. It is not doing that. It is a dismal, dismal failure, and each one of you today is going to get to experience that dismal failure, because today the time-of-use pricing starts. Your not-so-smart meter is going to not help you conserve energy and not help you save money, starting today.

What else? This government thinks it's good to cook up deals with generators of nuclear power to generate electricity that doesn't get used. We pay for Bruce nuclear to not generate power. How smart is that? That is

something that doesn't make any sense at all. This government is paying all kinds of money—actually, we're paying all kinds of money in our hydro rates—so that Bruce Power gets the money but they don't have to generate the electricity; they don't have to generate the hydro. That doesn't make sense at all—yet another wrong-headed decision and move by this government.

There are many, many examples of this government's failure when it comes to understanding that they have an obligation to pay attention to what their policies do to the people of this province. On the hydro file, these policies have been a failure from one end to the other. From the smart meters to their sweetheart deals with their friends at Bruce nuclear and Samsung, these things are simply wrong-headed.

Then we have the Ontario Energy Board, which decides, against all advice from Ontario experts, against all advice from people who know our energy system, and instead relying on the advice of American experts, that they should be granting the utilities, who are lobbying for this, an increase in their return on equity. What does that mean? That means, basically, that the Ontario Energy Board has said to all of the people of Ontario, "You have to pay a little bit more so that can you guarantee profits for those utilities"—shameful. And what makes it most shameful is that that decision was made over the protests of, against the best advice of, experts here in Ontario.

I have a list that I'm happy to share with you of people who, after that decision was made, were very quick to get on the record to say that they agree with the NDP that this was a wrong-headed move. So it's not just the NDP that's talking about this Ontario Energy Board decision; it's groups as diverse as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. All of those folks have written to the minister objecting to that decision, and we've objected to it too. But do you know what the minister says? "There's nothing I can do. This was a decision of the OEB." Well, that's not quite true. The minister actually can send a directive to the OEB. The minister can actually act in the interests of the people of this province, as opposed to the interests of the utility companies that simply want to gouge more profits for their corporations.

This government has long forgotten whose interests they are supposed to be serving. On the energy file alone, this government has shown that it has completely lost touch with the people of this province. No matter where I go in Ontario, no matter who I'm talking to, everybody agrees the government has lost touch. They are arrogant and they take care of their well-connected insiders before they take care of a senior citizen or a young mum who's got to worry about putting food on the table, paying the rent and paying the hydro bill.

What we are asking for in this motion is something very, very simple. What we are asking for is something the government can do that will make a little bit of a dent in the costs that people have to fork over every month on their hydro bill, and that is to simply take the HST off the

hydro bill. On top of all of those policies that I rhymed off where this government has gone wrong and forced those hydro bills up, the salt in the wound of those increases is the HST that this government has foisted on the people of Ontario. It's a very simple solution. It means an 8% reduction. That is significant. Take that 8% off. Give people a little bit of a break.

What does that mean? That means that close to six million households would see a break on their hydro bills. The average family with two kids or more: \$135—nothing to sneeze at. That's \$500 million that the people of this province would have back in their pockets, if the government only took the HST off of hydro.

1350

We've been bringing that issue to the Legislature over and over again, and as we've been doing that, we've also been telling the stories of regular families. I'm going to share some of those stories again today, but not very many, because I have a number of MPPs who are here in the NDP caucus, New Democrats who want to speak to this issue, who want to also talk about some of their concerns and why they believe that it's important to take the HST off of hydro. But I am going to share a couple of these stories, because I think they're important.

This is from Joanne. She happens to live in Mississauga and happens to be a constituent of the Minister of Government Services. She writes this: "My name is Joanne Leader and my home address is" in Mississauga. "I totally agree with the NDP ... that the HST should be removed from hydro. When I received my first hydro bill with the HST on it, I was shocked at the increase. Hydro is an essential service."

Joanne, we agree with you 100%. In fact, many Ontarians are using the same kind of language: They're shocked. They're appalled. They're just amazed at the rate of increase on their hydro bill, the amount of money that they suddenly are forced to pay for hydro. In fact, only in Ontario do people say that they're literally afraid to open their hydro bills—only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Here's another one. This person is from Nipissing and happens to be a constituent of the Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs and the government House leader.

"HST should be removed from hydro bills immediately," says Caroline Landry.

"Had the government realized that there are many people in northern Ontario who heat with hydro? What about us? We have higher-than-average hydro bills. You can't turn the heat off when you are not at home—your pipes will freeze. Those of us in rural areas also have to run pipes in for incoming water and outgoing water and sewage. Has anyone thought about that?

"In the past year, it has not been unusual to have a \$700 to \$800 hydro bill in January—and believe me, we are not toasty warm (we do not have a secondary source of heat)—the thermostats are usually set no higher than 15. The HST added to an \$800 hydro bill is \$104—that is highway robbery. And this is going to go on monthly ... people can't afford this, especially those on set income. The incentive my family received will not cover the HST

on my hydro for the first year, let alone anything else and going ahead.

"That has to stop. Something has to be done to help out people who heat with hydro in northern communities."

I'm glad that I chose this letter particularly, because when the Liberal members get up and make their speeches, I'm sure they're going to talk about all of these hoops that they've asked people to jump through to get a little bit of relief through tax credit processes and everything else.

We don't think people should have to jump through hoops. We don't think people should have to save receipts and make applications for tax credits on their income tax at the end of the year, as opposed to getting some immediate relief. That's what we think they should do. We think they should get some immediate relief, not have to jump through any hoops, and actually just get a point-of-sale reduction, or removal, of the HST off of hydro. It is fair. It is simple. It can be done immediately. It will provide money in people's pockets right away. And it will show the people of this province that maybe the government actually gets it.

One of the reporters asked me today during the scrums, "What happens if the government actually votes with your motion today? What if they vote with your motion and they actually steal this idea from you and take the HST off hydro?" I said that I welcome them to do that. I hope they do. I would support that wholeheartedly. It's not about whether it's my idea or not. What really matters is the people of the province and that they get some relief.

I say to the Liberal members across the way: Think about it and actually join us in the call. Get your Premier, your energy minister and your finance minister to do the right thing by the people of this province and take the HST off of hydro.

I'm going to close by saying this: I want to thank the thousands of people who have participated with us on the HST campaign; first, the initial campaign, when we were trying to convince this government not to go ahead with the HST, but of course they ignored 80% of the people of Ontario and they rammed through the HST. Now we've had thousands more people participating with us in this effort to try to get the HST off of the hydro bills. You send us emails, letters; you phone our offices; you provide us with information about your particular situation, and we do our best to bring those stories into the Legislature. We wouldn't be able to do that. We wouldn't be able to tell your story if you weren't telling it to us.

I want to wrap up my remarks by thanking the good people of the province of Ontario. We get letters and emails from everywhere, and people from all parts of the province are signing our online petition at hststoffhydro.com. If you haven't shared your story yet, that's where to go: hststoffhydro.com. Thank you. It's unfortunate that your frustration, your anger, is falling on deaf ears on that side of the House, the government side. But know that New Democrats have been listening to you,

that we appreciate that you've taken the time to support our efforts, and that we know that the right thing to do here is to provide some relief for folks who are really having a hard time making ends meet.

The government seems to think everybody is doing fine, everybody is flying high like all their friends whom they happen to provide extra money to through consultants and lobbyists and all of those kinds of well-connected folks. They think everybody is like that. I think they've forgotten that the vast majority of Ontarians are just regular folks who want to have a decent quality of life, who want to have a decent future for themselves and their kids, who want to have a clean environment and a positive outlook for the future. The government has forgotten that; we haven't.

Thank you for sharing your stories, and we look forward to fighting to get the HST off of hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Before we continue with the debate, I want to alert the House—the member from Nepean—Carleton brought this to my attention—that we have Yvonne Jones in the west members' gallery. She is the Liberal leader from Newfoundland. Please welcome her.

Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the dialogue that we're having this afternoon on a motion from the member from Hamilton Centre: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to immediately remove the HST from all Ontario hydro bills." Very clearly, it says, "all Ontario hydro bills," and I believe she referred to it that it can happen simply and just like that.

First and foremost, I'll just address that. I've got three directions I'd like to take for a moment. The first direction is to basically say where we've come from. The second part of that is where we are today and the acknowledgment of an economic downturn that the world saw. The third is to provide some information that I believe is maybe counter to what the member from Hamilton Centre has been trying to say.

First and foremost, I don't think anyone has a monopoly on how people are living their existence within their own ridings. I think it's an unfair characterization to assume that anyone who is in this place doesn't care about their riding, doesn't care about the people in it and has not, probably in their own private life, done some kind of public work to assist those who need our help. I want to make perfectly clear that I would not be bringing or casting aspersions on any member who would be working in their community and trying to help people who need it in that area. That's the first thing I want to talk about.

Now, where did we come from? I want to suggest to you that before 2003, we saw a billion dollars that got lost because of a 4.3-cent cap on hydro that was imposed by the previous government. During the 13 years previous to that, there was no new public generation in Ontario and there were no new supply links to any jurisdiction. There was a failure to implement an effective

conservation strategy. The price cap, as I said, when we talk about money, cost the Ontario taxpayers a billion dollars, with no incentive to conserve. Despite the dream team that was actually hired and was paid \$40 million for the refurbishment of Pickering unit A4, it was supposed to cost \$457 million and ended up costing \$1.25 billion and was years behind schedule. Under the previous government, we became a net importer of electricity from the United States, when we used to be an exporter. The promises that we were having 2,050 megawatts from the Pickering restart by 2001 and 1,200 megawatts from interlink with Quebec across the Ottawa River—neither one of those happened, and nothing for eight years during the government time that we had a lifeline from Manitoba after the NDP cancelled that project in 1990.

So I look at where we were: in disarray, confusion, chaos, with inconsistent pricing, no vision for the future, and no continuation of the future, of where we are now. Also, if I'm not mistaken, we bought a rainforest somewhere with the intention of it being classified as our contribution to conservation. So where we were to where we are today is a good contrast. I just wanted to make sure that that happened.

1400

During that time frame, OPG—Hydro One—was exempted from having any freedom-of-information requests to take a look at what we now know is an extensive use of consultants. By the end of that term, it was \$650 million on consultants. It's down to \$350 million or something like that now. I wanted to make sure we made that picture clear, the challenges that we had and had to pick up from now.

Let me make the first statement I made again and then I'll make my last statement. The first statement I made was talking about an understanding of where people are today because of the economic meltdown that we saw. Yes, there are frustrations out there. Yes, each and every one of us has been receiving emails of concern about pricing, the HST and costs to the individual. Yes, we have done some things to mitigate that, which again gets minimized by the member from Hamilton Centre as something that is not beneficial to people. Quite frankly, I disagree with that vehemently. A hundred dollars in somebody's pocket is a lot of money for any one of us who understands that.

I agree with the people who have contacted me by saying that giving us some type of relief and acknowledgment is not only the fact that they're getting that money, but it's also an indication that we understand that there are some difficulties. Since 2003, the government has continued to show in its deliberations and the policies that it has produced that it continues to understand what we want to do for Ontarians and not to them.

So what I want to talk about now is, as we recover from this, that the NDP is trying to say that this one issue is the be-all and end-all of the frustration. Quite frankly, you can take that out and plug in any other topic you want and they'll keep asking the same question: "Do you want to pay more or do you want to pay less?" We know

that the answer's going to be, "I want to pay less," but it's got to be done in such a way—I've always talked about the fair-mindedness of people in Ontario who recognize that we came from a disaster in the energy sector and we're moving towards a consistent and predictable situation with more power coming on, more conservation happening, and also, what I think is important, a shift from burning coal and the use of that and moving towards biomass, solar, wind and other opportunities that are presenting themselves not just for energy purposes but for industry, allowing us to use those jobs that are going to be coming towards us. I wanted to say that.

Conservation: Between 1993 and 1995, Ontario Hydro ended all conservation initiatives, and those were savings of 5,200 megawatts by 2000. That would have equalled that much, but they were all cancelled, and what government was it? The NDP government. The NDP voted against putting on a price cap, and then they voted against taking the cap off when we introduced its removal. During the five years of NDP rule, hydro rates went up 40%.

Interjection: Forty per cent?

Mr. Dave Levac: Forty per cent. The NDP cancelled the hydro lifeline to Manitoba. That's the one I referred to earlier. They're the ones who cancelled it. That deal actually cost us \$150 million in cancellation fees. Instead, the NDP thought, "Here's the replacement. We'll buy that rainforest in Costa Rica and that will be our soul and our conscience for that."

I really do believe that this particular motion we're talking about is wrong-headed. I honestly believe that, at the end of the day, as easy as she thinks it is, she knows there's going to be a negotiation that's going to be requested and required from the federal government.

You've got a government now that has already gone through—I've got a list of about 20 different things we've done, and I'd better put a couple of them on the record, in terms of the tax credits and the tax breaks, like the one that we just had in OED. I'll just simply announce there was a 3% reduction in the Ontario rates, so we're going to be seeing some downward pressures on the cost of energy.

Quite frankly, they voted against every measure we had to help our seniors and those who are disadvantaged. The NDP has voted against every single one of those measures. I think that's more telling than their motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to be here to debate on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. I want to assure my colleagues in the third party that we will be supporting this measure today. We hope that the Liberal government will pick up on this resolution after debate today, in the vote, so that Ontarians can finally receive the tax relief they so desperately need when they open up their hydro bills and almost every other bill that they're starting to see across

our province since the \$3-billion HST tax grab came into play.

It's increasingly clear each and every day that the Dalton McGuinty government has continually increased taxes and energy rates. It's now taking a toll on Ontario households right across our province, whether it is in Nepean–Carleton, whether it is in Toronto and whether it's in our northern communities. It's become so drastic that many people have begun to email us. The number one concern in our constituency offices is no longer access to family physicians. In fact, the number one issue has become whether or not people can pay their hydro bills. We saw today that the Minister of Energy not only is not responding to the third party's request, but he is also not going to rule out a hike on natural gas. The snow started to fall in Nepean–Carleton yesterday. People were forced to turn up the heat. What did we hear from the Liberal government? There was no emphatic, "No, we will not increase natural gas." Instead, do you know what we were told? To turn off our air-conditioners to save our energy rates.

Mr. John O'Toole: We're going to be freezing in the dark.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As my colleague Mr. O'Toole from Durham says, we will be freezing in the dark, and that is what has many, many Ontario taxpayers concerned. In fact, things are so bad now that even the New Democrats have picked up on the official opposition or the Progressive Conservative Party's call for tax relief. We all know, on this side of the House, that Ontario families need a break. It seems that the only person in Ontario who has no idea how bad it is for Ontario families and seniors out there today is the Premier of Ontario, the member from Ottawa South. He is so out of touch that he thinks you have an endless ability to pay the bills after he continually hikes them. In fact, I've said many times, on many occasions, that this Premier views every soccer mom, grandmother and small business as his own ATM. That has got to stop.

His expensive energy schemes, whether those are the windmills or the solar farms or his multi-billion-dollar Samsung deal or even these smart meters, which our leader calls tax machines, have nothing more to do with the everyday economy as they do with his own personal ambitions to bring forward energy schemes that could clearly be unworkable and who—by the end of the day, it's very clear that the people paying for this are everyday moms and dads across this province.

As I relate back to this particular motion, where the New Democrats are proposing that we remove the HST from Ontario hydro bills, we believe that's welcome, but as you'll recall, the only political party in Ontario today with a track record of reducing taxes is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. In fact, if you look to our neighbours to the east, if you look at Nova Scotia right now, it was the NDP that increased the HST after they took office, and it is now the Nova Scotia PC leader, Jamie Baillie, who has made a commitment just as of yesterday to decrease the HST and repeal that 2% in-

crease when he takes office. I want to applaud the newly elected PC leader in Nova Scotia, Jamie Baillie.

Again, it speaks to the fact that wherever you are, coast to coast, Ontarians and Canadians need tax relief, and here in the province of Ontario, we certainly need that relief. That's why a Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, has committed to deliver real relief for hard-working families so that they will have the confidence to start spending again in our economy. We need to get moving and create more jobs.

1410

Today I have my old friend Yvonne Jones, who is the Liberal leader in Newfoundland. I want to congratulate her for coming to our chamber today to meet with us and talk to us. If you want to see an economy that has started to improve, it is our colleagues' in Newfoundland. We have also seen it happening in Saskatchewan, where people are moving and they're working again.

We need to restore Ontario as the leader of Confederation. Sadly, we are now the have-not province. We are now the province with a \$21-billion deficit. We are the ones who are losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each and every year. We need to create an environment where our Ontario families and our Ontario seniors feel comfortable spending again, and we need them to feel comfortable working again, knowing that their hard-earned tax dollars are going to be used wisely. Of course, Madam Speaker, as you know, that hasn't happened in quite some time in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. In fact, what we have seen time and again—as it relates last week to even another Auditor General's report on spending, scandal and waste at Ontario hospitals and within our larger health care sector.

That's why the Progressive Conservative Party will bring forward not only an affordable and comprehensive plan to give tax relief to Ontario families, but we will also bring forward a stringent and tough accountability plan. That's why we want to speak to another bill that will be up for debate later today on the accountability plan that this Liberal government has brought in. They need to make it tougher, because those tax dollars that we're asking people to pay, whether it's on their hydro bills or definitely through their HST dollars—on one hand the government is taking it, and on the other hand they're just wasting and squandering it. That's not fair to everyday Ontarians, particularly those with small and growing families and even more so for Ontario seniors, who have been hardest hit by this recession.

We in the Ontario PC caucus believe that is a critical issue, and that's why we'll continue to fight for taxpayers in the province, and that's why we'll support the NDP motion. As I said, it's highly important, when the snow starts to fly in the northern economy and the northern climate that we are in, that we give people a break.

People are scared these days. They don't want to open their hydro bill. It sits on the kitchen table for weeks on end because they simply can't pay it. It's the number one issue we're hearing about in our constituency offices,

whether they're calling you on the telephone to tell you they can't afford to pay it or they're walking into the constituency office. They showed up at the fall fairs. We're seeing the folks each and every day. In fact, I was over at a school on Friday for Halloween, and one of the parents came over to me and said, "My husband is going to be dressing up as Scrooge this year, as Dalton McGuinty, when we put up our Christmas lights, because we simply can't afford our hydro bills any longer."

I see my friend the energy critic for the Progressive Conservative Party walking in. He will tell you, having spent most of Saturday with me, that the number one issue that people were talking to him and me about this weekend was energy, their high hydro rates and what we need to do to turn this province around again. That's why I'm happy he's here. He'll be contributing in debate later today.

The issue at hand is actually quite a large one, because what the NDP is proposing is to remove the HST from hydro. It speaks to two issues: It speaks to the energy issue that the Liberals want to talk about, but it also speaks to the high taxation rate in the province of Ontario that people can't afford any longer. That's why we in the Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to stand up for hard-working taxpayers; it's why we applaud our colleagues in the third party for proposing an initiative; and it's why we, in our deliberations, get prepared for our platform, due out before the next election, on how we can offer real tax relief to Ontario residents right across the province.

With that, as the revenue critic, I will cede the floor. I know I have several colleagues who would like to debate this resolution, including our energy critic, who has a few things to say about the smart meters and the other wasteful spending initiatives of this Liberal government.

At this point in time, I want to leave you with the clarity that the official opposition will support the New Democrats today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the discussion here, I'd just like to say that you've got to ask yourself a question. In the last few years in Hamilton and surrounding areas, we've had massive job loss. We've had closures of plants. We've had all kinds of negative impacts on our society in the Hamilton–Niagara region. You'd think, with common sense, that a government wouldn't bring in a new tax to finish us off, but they decided to. They brought in the HST.

One of the biggest problems for the industries in Hamilton was hydro costs. My impression would be that if you wanted to help the people of Hamilton, you would lower the hydro costs and have cogeneration and invest in things like that. So what do they do? They raise it. You might as well chase a few more businesses out of Hamilton that were still there.

They say they're creating work. They stand up, day in and day out, and say, "We're creating 600,000 jobs. We're creating 50,000 jobs in green energy." I don't know where those 600,000 jobs are, but they certainly

aren't in the Hamilton area or Niagara. I don't know where those jobs are. I think they just take it out of a hat and say, "That's the number we're going with."

The 50,000 green venture jobs: Let's talk about that. They say they're going to have windmills and things like this and build wind-power-driven windmills. Well, that's interesting. Where will they build these windmills? Not in Hamilton, where they've just laid off 500 Siemens guys, all tradespeople. They have the facilities, the infrastructure, the transportation, the shipping. Everything is there in Hamilton to build these windmills for the green economy, and we're not even in the top three. We've got everything there. They don't have to build a new factory. We've got brownfields. We've got everything they need there to build without causing further pollution somewhere else, possibly, and maintaining and trying to keep the pollution under check where it already has been for the last 50 or 60 years. That would be common sense. No, they're not looking at that. We're in the running, but I don't think, for some reason—because it's not a Liberal area—that we'll see those jobs.

I'm very concerned about that. You don't tax people who are already in trouble. You don't hammer them again where it hurts. You don't put more people on the street and say you've created 600,000 jobs and 50,000 green venture jobs.

I don't know where they are. I certainly haven't seen them, and I haven't seen anybody step forward to say how many jobs they've created in their communities. I hear the odd bit here—600 here, 200 here, 300. Any bit helps, but it certainly isn't helping my community.

It's actually unconscionable that this government has taken no steps to remove the HST off hydro bills. I'll just give you one example from a woman from Hamilton, right here: Lynda Narducci, from Hamilton:

"I am a single mom, desperately trying to hold on to the home that my children love. In the words of my 11-year-old daughter, 'I will do anything'" to help so they can stay in their house rather than go to a two-bedroom apartment.

"These charges in addition to the HST are killing me! [I'm] working three jobs, trying to keep my children optimistic and hopeful, trying to be 'peaceful,' as the stress is not good for my health.

"I don't know if anyone can help me. I'm just saying my piece and hoping" that the government will do the right thing. Well, don't hold your breath, Lynda, because it doesn't seem to be moving in that direction.

I've heard from many of my constituents and other residents and businesses in Hamilton that they cannot continue to pay for the Liberal government's ever-escalating tax-and-tax-and-tax-again agenda.

Just to help the governing group understand that we're the ones speaking on behalf of Ontarians, including their own constituents, let me read an email from Laura, who lives in Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Revenue's riding. Laura says: "I'll be short and sweet: Remove it from electrical bills. As my representative, I demand that you stand up for me and my family." Interesting.

That the HST was ever included on hydro, one of the very basic needs in the province, is beyond my comprehension.

Let's talk about today. When home heating was mentioned and the costs there, the government would not commit to not putting the HST on it. You've got hydro now, so they kill you in the summer, and now they're going to kill you in the winter with heat costs. That's really going to attract business. That's going to make businesses stay in Hamilton. I think not.

The hated sales tax may see many families, not just those in the north—people down here now might have to revert to candles, hurricane lanterns and maybe a few more winter barbecues to save money, to ease the pressure on already overburdened hydro costs, a situation that can only make emergency services a little nervous during the upcoming winter season. "We'll fire up that barbie in the garage; it may be a fire hazard. I don't know. I hope not, because we don't want to turn on the stove. It's electric."

1420

The government makes many claims about how much it's doing for Ontarians. The only thing they're doing for Ontarians is putting us behind the eight ball further and further. That's what they're doing for Ontarians. They claim they've got this bright future with all these jobs. I don't really know where it is. It certainly isn't in my community. They only have to read their own emails to know that their constituents are mad too, and I'm sure a lot of them don't even want to go home and read them. I bet they're just overwhelmed with emails.

They want this mess cleaned up. This government doesn't have the tools and ability to clean the mess up. We need a change in government. The public is very tired of puffed-up Liberal rhetoric. They want real action to fix the tax mess this governing group has imposed on every Ontarian. I want to make it clear to Ontarians that probably six months before the election or even three months before, they'll come out and hand out a few cheques in different areas. I hope the people of Ontario don't buy it. I hope they're not tricked by this, because you've got to look at the last seven years and what's happened. I don't think this time they're going to be tricked.

These government ministers take every opportunity during question period to avoid answering the questions by accusing the opposition of all sorts of bad actions—not true. Even when I was debating in high school, the best defence was an offence. So what do you do when you haven't got answers? You attack the opposition. You attack their platform because you don't have one. And the one you have, if you've got one, isn't working.

They've had seven painful years to correct each of the claims they make on what they've done with hydro. What have they done? In our humble opinion, nothing but accuse, nothing but avoid, nothing but continue their inaction on these issues that are significant to everyday Ontarians; in a word, not much, all the while imposing taxes on other costs that make living in Ontario un-

affordable for everybody. Rather than just trot out their campaign-style litany of the alleged actions of the opposition parties, it's time for this governing group to fix those actions that are so offensive to them and stop talking about what we are talking about. The best defence is an offence.

While they are at it, they can fix the HST mess, because they know that, this time next year, we'll be the ones reminding them of their real tax-and-tax-again policies that are significantly harming all Ontarians. Perhaps there is a glimmer of light. Perhaps the group across the floor will actually listen to Laura and other Ontarians. Perhaps they'll realize the folly of their HST and perhaps they'll finally take the necessary action to fix this debacle and begin removing the HST from all hydro bills. My constituents are waiting for action. They haven't seen any yet. Laura on Hamilton Mountain is waiting for action and hundreds and hundreds of thousands—millions—of other Ontarians are waiting for action, not talk.

I dread to think, if they put the same thing, the HST, on all the other bills that are going to come up this winter, what state this province is going to be in—rough shape.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga South.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Let me start by saying that I'd like nothing more than to reduce taxes further, right throughout the system. Today we're talking about removing it, by the opposition's point, through hydro. Tomorrow it'll be gas; tomorrow it'll be something else. We'd like nothing more than to be able to reduce taxes right across the board.

But at the same time, the opposition members are demanding and asking for more support for a number of initiatives. Then it begs the question: How are we going to support that with loss of revenue? That's the trick. That's what we are trying to do as government, to try to balance the initiatives that we have to enable us to stimulate economic growth while protecting the environment and ensuring that we create jobs and we support future generations going forward.

Ontarians recognize that there is a pressing need to support a stable electricity grid. For decades, government after government has ignored this responsibility. No new generation was added, transmission infrastructure was left to crumble, and the use of dirty coal was increased. That's why we must invest in our electricity system. We must continue to invest now. We should have invested before.

Initiatives already under way include taking Ontario off of dirty coal and upgrading 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines. Since 2003, 8,000 megawatts of new energy supply have been brought online. These initiatives have costs, and that's why the government has also taken steps to help ratepayers, especially seniors, to manage those costs, such as cutting personal income taxes on the lowest income bracket and introducing a new sales tax credit. We're also moving to time-of-use pricing that

allows residents to benefit from lower costs during off-peak hours.

The Minister of Finance also introduced legislation that would offer even more assistance. The Ontario energy and property tax credit would allow almost one million seniors to receive up to \$1,025 per year, permanently. In addition, for seniors who own their home, this August you may be eligible for a property tax grant worth up to \$500 a year, for a total of up to \$1,525 going back into your pockets every year.

We agree on this side of the House, on the government side, and I will continue to seek means to support and minimize the impact of rising energy costs.

This is about a pendulum swing—and I'm going to explain myself in a moment. This is about tax reform. Again, it's about stimulating economic activity while protecting our environment.

As we recover from the global recession, we recognize that some Ontarians are struggling. The McGuinty government understands that Ontario families have been through tough times.

The NDP, in my opinion, are trying to exploit the issue of hydro prices and claim that they stand up for the average taxpayer. They say they have opposed our tax cuts that were specifically targeted to low- and middle-income Ontario families and seniors.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit that I spoke of will help 740,000 Ontario seniors and 2.8 million middle- and lower-income Ontarians to receive relief. Under the Ontario energy and property tax credit, Ontarians who own or rent a home could receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to, as I said, \$1,025.

The opposition called on us to implement a northern Ontario industrial hydro rate to help create and retain jobs in the region and then voted against it when we brought it forward. I feel it was inappropriate that the NDP opposed our tax cuts that were specifically targeted to help low- and middle-income families and seniors. We want to help those who need it most.

We recognize that these same Ontario families are also dealing with rising energy costs. We care about how we can support those who are the most vulnerable and the most exposed, and we will continue to work with them. We have already, as I said, made over a billion dollars in relief available through the use of some of our tools on electricity use.

It's also important to recognize the value of the investments we've made in the energy system over the past number of years. We can't turn back to the days of tight supply and smog. Our continuing investments, through our electricity bills, are needed to meet those needs and clean our air. Ontario, in my opinion, has more to do with regard to energy, certainly. But we are becoming an energy leader again, and we can't turn the clock back now.

When it comes to energy, I believe the NDP have been reckless. In power, they cancelled conservation programs and raised hydro rates by 40%. When the Conservatives brought in a taxpayer-funded \$1-billion price freeze, they

voted against that. Then, when the McGuinty government cancelled the price freeze, they voted against that, too. Now the leader of the third party muses about getting rid of nuclear power without presenting any alternative to make up the difference, despite the fact that nuclear makes up half of our power generation. Our base supply of energy is nuclear, and it's emissions-free. We have to take a balanced approach with other sources of energy supply. It's reckless, I believe, to simply say that we're going to do away with nuclear and that we're not going to invest in upgrading our infrastructure and supporting and facilitating the integrity of our grid system.

As mentioned, the government has brought online more than 8,000 new megawatts of power into the system, and we've upgraded 5,000 kilometres of transmission. We have made some steady progress. More importantly, we're shutting down dirty coal by the end of 2014. Just last month, we closed four more coal units. These investments will strengthen the health of our economy, the health of our environment and the health of all Ontarians.

1430

We've introduced measures to help those most vulnerable, including our seniors and low-income earners.

Let's talk a little bit about conservation for a moment. The best way to reduce energy bills, I believe, is through conservation. Frankly, we've heard that from all parties, and yet the opposition like to complain about the smart meter program. Smart meters are more than just billing. Installing a smart meter allows consumers to sign up for innovative new programs like Peaksaver that provide further incentives for homeowners to conserve and save money.

It seems to me that the NDP are taking their lead from the Hudak Conservatives when it comes to campaigning against conservation led by Ontario's new smart meters. But the Environmental Commissioner couldn't disagree more with the two opposition leaders, and this is what he had to say: "It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity, or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted." He further says, "Going back to the same-old-same-old that did not work is not the answer," and that "environmental issues tend to get obscured by the shadows and fog of misinformation and short-sighted thinking."

So let's talk about this pendulum. On the one hand, we've got a proposal by one opposition party who are suggesting, "Cut your taxes and cut services and put our energy at risk." On the other side, you've got another opposition that says, "Increase taxes; do not cut taxes." In fact, the NDP has suggested we increase PST, and then find themselves at a point of increasing spending. So on the one hand we have a slash-and-burn policy, whereas on the other hand we have a tax-and-spend policy. What's necessary here is to take a balanced approach.

To offset those HST costs, to manage electricity costs, we provided some of those tax credits, and we need to find ways to protect Ontarians. But through the implementation of the HST, which was supported, I may say,

and encouraged by our Conservative federal cousins and husbands, we find ourselves trying to find ways to foster stimulus in the economic system by enabling those flow-throughs of tax so as not to impose tax upon tax. That stimulus encourages more investment; that investment encourages the creation of good jobs. What people want and what Ontarians want is the opportunity to work. We need to help those most vulnerable. We need to provide those support systems. What they really want is the ability to work, and that is why some of our tax reforms have been implemented. That is also why a lot of offsets have occurred: so that 93% of Ontarians will get more tax cuts.

The thing before us now, through this motion—and I would hazard to say that even as we talk about some of the tax reforms that have been put in place, I would just like to quote one more. That would be Ken Neumann, national director of the United Steelworkers, who says:

"More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need; and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers" and Ontarians "want for their kids, too." He further says, "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow.... More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy, too."

I'll conclude by suggesting that the NDP has a record of opposing any initiatives they brought forward to help create jobs to help Ontario families pay bills—on everything, as such. They opposed investing in an aging energy system. They opposed measures for job creation and economic recovery. They opposed clean, reliable, emissions-free nuclear power that generates half of our energy supply. They opposed the modernization of our energy system. They opposed support for northern Ontario. They opposed the agreement with Samsung that would—I would presume they would prefer to see the \$7-billion investment and 16,000 jobs go to a competing jurisdiction.

They are for conservation one day, and they're against it the next. It's clear the NDP are a threat to the reliability of our energy system and, I believe, a threat to our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate on this motion that calls for the McGuinty government to remove the HST off of hydro bills.

I'm proud to have the chance to speak on this important issue because I know that my constituents in Leeds and Grenville are watching with keen interest. I know they're watching because the crippling cost of electricity is the number one concern from residents across my riding.

They write to me, they email me, they stop me when I'm at events, and they call my office. Every single time they do, the message is the same: They are desperate for relief. Often we talk about the anger that can be directed in some voters. Some may say that the municipal election

last week in some races tapped into anger, and some councils changed because of it.

But when it comes to hydro bills, what I hear from desperate constituents that I represent isn't so much anger, although they're definitely not happy; it's fear. Whether it's a senior on a fixed income in Kemptville or Gananoque or Portland, a family in Cardinal or Lyndhurst or Westport or a small business in Merrickville or Prescott or Brockville, people are scared. As a result of the double whammy that we have of soaring rates and the HST—which, I should point out, applies not just to the electricity portion of the bill but also, as many constituents talk to me about, the debt retirement charge—people are falling behind. People are scared.

Inevitably, when they do fall behind, Hydro One is going to have a surprise for them. In addition to smart meters, in addition to HST, what we're finding is that Hydro One then is going to slap on a security deposit. Even those constituents who are having a difficult opportunity to pay back, to stay ahead, again, they're going to call our offices like they've done, and then they're going to be forced to hand over even more money out of their disposable income to deal with hydro costs.

People are concerned about being able to keep the lights on, heat the family home and still make ends meet. For the large majority of these hard-working people it's the first time—for many of them, in their lives—that they've contacted an MPP to ask for some help.

It's little wonder that they're so scared. These people have reached the breaking point, and they're looking for myself and members of this Legislative Assembly to provide them some real relief. They don't want to hear any more talk. They want lower hydro bills and the chance to catch up.

That's why I'm so eager to speak to the leader of the third party's motion today. It offers us a chance here today at Queen's Park to give an immediate 8% break to Ontarians who need it.

I'm going to take the opportunity, as I know so many of my colleagues have, to read into the record some of the comments that I've received from some of my constituents. I know I've written the Minister of Energy regarding this fellow, Brian Reed from Mallorytown, who was extremely frustrated when he contacted my office regarding the rising cost of his electrical service. He's a long-haul truck driver. He's only home a couple of days a week. His wife is back home. They are modest energy users. They've got one fridge, do their laundry once a week, watch a couple of hours of TV—nothing extravagant. Yet they've seen their hydro bill jump to an average of \$300 per month.

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He writes, "During tough economic times such as we are in, these increases are simply moronic. What were they thinking? These increases, coupled with a slowdown in shipping"—because he gets paid by the mile—the introduction of the HST and other things like the eco tax caused him to fall behind. Hydro One whacked him with a \$600 security deposit.

He closes his letter: "For all it is worth, please pass my concerns on to those responsible. Ask them to think of me each night when they go home to their families, for decisions that allow increased cost in utilities, housing and taxation force me to spend even more hours on the road," away from his family, just trying to survive.

Yesterday, I received an email from small business owner Steven McArthur, who is a director at Bingoland in Brockville, writing me and urging me to vote in favour of this motion, which I am, that would remove HST from the hydro bills. He's operated that business for about the last seven years. Certainly, when he and his staff talk to their patrons, obviously, with the increase in cost of living as a result of the HST, they particularly mention HST on their hydro bills. They represent 40 charities across Leeds-Grenville who are struggling to support thousands of residents that they provide assistance to from their revenues.

In closing, Mr. MacArthur says: "Please help remove the HST from our residents' hydro bills and vote to remove it when you are called upon. Your community needs your support." I'm pleased to support them.

I was pleased to hear from Vickie Long. We actually went to high school together. She now lives in South Elmsley. She's seen her bill jump from \$197 to \$346 a month, and she's not even on her smart meter yet. So there's the concern, and we're not even into winter. She talks about her worry for others, her worry for young families. How are they going to be able to survive this winter? In fact, she lets me know that in BC, her sister's hydro bill is less than \$50 for two months, and hers is \$346 here in Ontario. Vickie's asking that I, as her MPP, bring her concerns forward.

People are so mad, they're writing everybody. This is a letter, actually, from my MP. She wrote the MP. He's a good friend of mine so he passed it along to me. I appreciate Mr. Brown passing it along to me. He's a good guy. It's from Tricia Macdonnell from the Gananoque area; it leads into the Thousand Islands:

"I am writing to you today in regard to the increase in my hydro bill since the 'smart meter' program" came forward. "Hydro is a basic need in every household, and I am completely powerless with the increase in rates. My bill has increased ... \$100 a month."

She called Hydro. Guess what happened? No resolution to her concerns; none at all.

She closes her letter: "I have always felt that the smart meter program is nothing more than a scheme under the notion of conserving energy and does nothing more than raise our rates, and my phone call to Hydro confirmed this."

With the implementation of the HST and the increase in hydro due to the smart meter program, where would our government presume working families like Tricia's are going to come up with the extra income they pay?

Just over the last couple of days, I've received three emails. They're all actually from the Kemptville area, and they're very interesting.

This first one is from Jane and Arndt Vogel: "My husband and I moved from Longueuil, Quebec, near Mon-

trear, where we both lived all our lives, to Kemptville ... four years ago." They took early retirements, built their dream home on a beautiful lot. They're planning to spend the next 30 or more years in Ontario.

However, "Unfortunately, the cost of living here has become exorbitant, in particular due to the cost of hydroelectricity." In Quebec, their house, double the size of their current home, amounted to less than half of what they pay in Ontario.

The important thing in this scenario is that in Quebec, their house completely ran on electricity—lights, water, air conditioning, heating—whereas here in Ontario, they heat with gas. They don't heat with electricity. They're asking: Please dispense with "the HST on anything essential to life, such as electricity, gasoline, propane/gas, telephone and food, so that people living in this province can actually continue to do so."

Same with the Wylies, Rick and Carol, from the Kemptville area. They moved there three years ago. It's one of the fastest-growing municipalities in eastern Ontario, located in my riding. It was, again, their retirement home—but there again, finding "the feasibility of staying here due to the rising cost of our hydro." Friends of theirs with the same-sized house living in another province—I believe it was Quebec—pay only 40 bucks a month: \$40 a month for their electricity. Again, they're asking the same question, the debate we're having today: "Please look at removing the HST off anything that is essential to life, such as hydro, heating, gas etc. These are things for most people that we have no choice in purchasing." It's not a luxury.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Did you talk to Jim Flaherty about this one?

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't need to talk to Jim Flaherty, Minister; I'm talking to you, and I know you're going to listen to me.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Finally, I'm going to read an email from Kim Lynch. Again, it happened to be on Saturday.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Minister of Education. Order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Kim writes a letter: "I realize I am just one constituent in your riding, but I am sure that I could possibly be a voice to thousands" of financially cash-strapped owners "that cannot avoid paying their monthly, out-of-control hydro bill."

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Now listen up, everybody. Her husband works full-time. She only works part-time at a local child care centre. But this HST on their hydro bill has been an added financial pressure. "We are very careful with our hydro usage." They replaced their old appliances. They unplug things when they don't need to use them. They try to use their dishwasher and their washer and dryer in off-peak hours. They're doing exactly what you are asking them to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And they're still getting whacked.

Mr. Steve Clark: They are. They are still getting whacked. They heat with oil, but they are paying as much in hydro as they are in oil for their modest 1,200-square-foot home.

The people of Leeds–Grenville have made it very clear to me—and I have lots and lots of other cards. These were actually sent out before the HST even came forward. It was a very non-partisan mailer that I sent out as my first mailer. You read them all—HST. People are very frustrated: seniors, students, small business people. You've got them all there; they're all covered.

I'm proud today that I'm going to join with my colleagues here, because I know that the relief of that 8% will be a wonderful relief. It finally will give people a break. I know my colleague beside me, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, mentioned today the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, because she thought that it was only the rich who benefit from the HST relief. I can assure her that the people who will benefit from taking this tax grab off such a basic item as electricity aren't rich. They are working families. They're seniors on a fixed income who every day are watching whatever small amount of disposable income they have vanish. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus understand the need for tax relief to give hard-working Ontario families a break.

I'm delighted that this motion joins PCs and New Democrats to start moving forward, but the big question that I believe the people of Leeds–Grenville are waiting for is whether this government gets it. Will the Liberal members of this House do the right thing and join with the PC Party and the NDP in supporting this motion? Ontarians are watching.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am not going to vote for this unfair proposal that would transfer wealth from the pockets of low- and moderate-income Ontarians into the hands of the wealthy and to owners of large monster homes. But we expect nothing less from a rhetorical wedge issue from a party that is opposed to generating electricity by splitting the atom, opposed to generating electricity by burning fossil fuel, opposed to generating electricity by harnessing the wind, opposed to generating electricity by building hydro dams, and opposed to generating electricity by converting solar light into photovoltaic power. No matter how you propose to generate electricity, the NDP is against you. The NDP is against the generation of electricity.

In government, the NDP not only cancelled all Ontario conservation measures; the NDP also cancelled every project intended to transmit electricity into Ontario. That hydro lifeline from Manitoba would have been completed years ago and could now be powering some 600,000 homes in Ontario with clean, affordable electricity. The NDP is against the transmission of electricity.

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In addition to their own intransigent opposition to all conservation measures proposed by the province, the NDP had, as just mentioned, its own cancellation of all

conservation measures during their one unfortunate, unproductive stint in government. The NDP is against the conservation of electricity.

Now the NDP continues its shameful war on everyone who uses electricity by being against every means of paying for electricity. The NDP have voted against the Conservatives for putting a price cap on electricity. After that price cap added a billion dollars to the debt borne by all Ontario consumers of electricity, the NDP voted against taking the price cap off.

Now the NDP does not want the users of electricity to pay for what they consume, let alone the cost of rebuilding, replacing and expanding Ontario's electricity generation and transmission system. The NDP is against people paying for electricity.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Bob Delaney: So now we know where we stand. The NDP does not believe in any facet of generating, transmitting, using, metering—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): If we could please listen intently to the member. You will have a chance to respond shortly. Please recognize the chair. Thank you.

Member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

The NDP is against any method of generating, transmitting, using, metering or paying for electricity. And now we're supposed to take this motion seriously.

What happened in Nova Scotia, where the NDP actually took power? Did the Nova Scotia HST come off of electricity?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Did the Nova Scotia HST come off of anything else? No. In fact, the HST rate went up in Nova Scotia when the NDP took power.

In fact, what happened in Great Britain when David Cameron and the Conservatives took power? Did they cut taxes? Did they maintain services? No, they didn't. In fact, in Great Britain, the Conservatives jacked up the value-added tax to 20%. Are you thinking of the Ontario PC Party? Think seriously of a 20% GST-HST combination.

Now, let's look a little more closely at this resolution. Ontario already rebates the HST to seniors and to low- and middle-income families. Ontario has done this on the watch of a Liberal government by lowering our taxes. Our taxes are now the lowest in the Great Lakes and the Midwestern states region. Lower taxes and the homeowners' property and tax credit put the cash to pay bills where it's needed most.

The NDP proposal means that the more electricity you consume, the greater your discount. The NDP proposal means that owners of monster homes are winners and owners of modest homes are losers. The NDP proposal

means that homeowners who run a business in their homes lose their input tax credit and increase their paperwork. The NDP proposal begs the question: If any ordinary Ontarian should not be expected to pay for electricity, then who should?

As Ontario, as envisioned by the NDP, looks at steadily failing electricity generation, crumbling transmission and a structural inability to pay for services, where do they imagine Ontario will get its power? The NDP doesn't care. Ontarians are not the fools that the NDP takes them to be.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontarians know that electricity here in this province is already cheaper than it is in any place that doesn't have a small market and a lot of rivers to dam. It's cheaper than in the US northeast, way cheaper than in the US south—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I would ask the members from the third party—this is your motion—would you like to hear what he has to say? You have a chance to respond in a few minutes. I will start to name members.

Member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

Electricity in Ontario is way cheaper than the US south and southeast; cheaper than the industrial states; cheaper than the US Midwest; much cheaper than California; and much, much cheaper than Europe or Japan or Hong Kong or nearly everywhere in Asia. But none of that matters to the NDP. None of that matters to a party that opposes the generation of electricity by any means, opposes the transmission of electricity, regardless of where the corridor lies, and opposes any means to pay for the generation, transmission, distribution or consumption of electricity.

They have no plan to keep Ontario's lights on. Indeed, the only possible outcome of the NDP's reckless, irresponsible energy policies is to punch Ontario's lights out. Ontarians deserve better and they've got it right before them.

Today, Ontario is North America's acknowledged leader in the generation of electricity through environmentally responsible, low-emission means. That's the way of the future—a low-emission, up-to-date, sustainable energy system that Ontario's Liberal government has conceived and implemented, not the freeze-in-the-dark policies of the NDP. Low- and modest-income families need hope, they need the jobs, the investment, the careers and the prosperity that Ontario's investment in baseload power and clean, green energy will bring, and that's the plan that Ontario is implementing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It is certainly a pleasure to participate in the debate here on the third party's opposition day motion.

Certainly on this side of the House, we're all in agreement with the fact that almost every question that's been asked—and in editorials on energy—almost all of the issues basically have stemmed around energy. I would say this: The Ontario Power Authority is just one example. They sent out this very interesting little card to every household in Ontario. Today is actually the day that the winter rate clicks in, November 1. That is the time when there's more extended darkness in Ontario, and people in their homes, whether they're seniors or people who are confined to their own homes, will need to turn the heat up. And what are they going to do? They're going to be paying more taxes.

This is clearly a structured tax grab by any measure. If you look at this whole arrangement of on-peak and off-peak—I'll give you an example. A lot of people around perhaps not just Ontario, but Canada—we often refer to jurisdictions around the world that have efficient, green or environmentally friendly energy. We often refer to Denmark, Sweden and countries like that. The average price of electricity in Denmark is 34 cents a kilowatt hour. Our average price over the years has been around five cents per kilowatt hour.

I'm reading directly from the Ontario Power Authority, an agency of Premier McGuinty. The cheapest rate they're going to have off-peak, about 4 o'clock in the morning, is 5.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That time of day is actually from about 9:30 at night until a little bit before 7 in the morning. What the Premier said the other day is that people should do their laundry and energy-consuming activities off-peak. In other words, you have to get up at 9 at night and go to bed at 7 in the morning. That's kind of the plan here.

The mid-peak range is going to be eight cents a kilowatt hour, from five cents. That's a significant increase. It's close to an 80% increase in electricity. The on-peak—now, this is important for members to listen to. This is what you're choosing to do to your constituents. It's going to go to 10 cents a kilowatt hour from five cents. It's going to double. Whatever they say on the other side—if they don't know, then they shouldn't speak on it, and if they do know, they're not being forthright with the people in Ontario. It's that simple.

Not only that, it's going to be taxed. It's going to have HST on top of it, which is further—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The former Minister of Agriculture and the now Minister of Education is saying I'm making it up. I ask her to refute what I am saying. I'm reading from their document. This is your document. It appears now from what you've said, Mrs. Dombrowsky, that you don't know—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would the member refer to—

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Education. It appears that she doesn't know, because she said that what I'm saying is wrong. I want that on the record because, during the election, if you're showing this lack of integrity with your constituents—quite honestly, I'm surprised.

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I want to refer people to some real information here. I don't want to use too much time. There's a very good article—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The minister's leaving. If I offended her, I apologize.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Here's the issue. There's a very good article. It's worth reading. I encourage members on the opposite side to read it. "The Soaring Price of Electricity Is Due to the Green-Energy Activism of George Smitherman." Well, George got a good spanking there; he got a real good spanking the other day. I think that people were right. They knew then that George led them down the wrong road. This article is worth reading. It says here, "The Swedish retail giant IKEA announced yesterday it will invest \$4.6 million" on 3,790 solar panels in Toronto stores to produce 960,000 kilowatt hours per year.

Now, on the feed-in tariff—this is technical, so listen up—they're going to receive 71.3 cents for each kilowatt hour, which amounts to \$6,800 a year for each home. Sixty-eight hundred dollars is what the homes should be paying and will be paying in terms of this, and IKEA will get 71 cents per kilowatt hour.

It goes on to say, "Since the average Toronto home currently pays about \$1,200 for the same quantity of electricity, that implies that IKEA is being overpaid by \$5,400 per home equivalent." That's going to be spread over the rate, so all the other rates are going up so that you don't notice. Imagine: 71 cents per kilowatt hour, and that power is going to be dispatched whenever it's available. They'll shut down nuclear plants just to dispatch the renewable stuff.

I think that the people around Ontario should be outraged. This article is not written by anything more than an expert.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'll try to. Steve went a little longer than his 10.

I would say that this is it. If you read this article and pay attention, the consumers of Ontario are going to pay more and be blamed for using any electricity because they're going to say, "You have a smart meter that tells you when you should have switched your usage to an off-peak rate." This is not fair to the people of Ontario, and our leader, Tim Hudak, will change the rules. I am certain of that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a privilege and a pleasure to rise on this debate. Every single day, when I'm opening up the newspaper, when I'm watching the news on television or on the radio, I'm hearing arguments and talk, and radio call-in shows, columnists and TV broadcasters. They're talking about time of use. They're talking about smart meters. They're talking about the HST on hydro. They're talking about the HST on debt

repayment. They're talking about the stranded debt. They're talking about the public utilities financing the Liberals. They're talking about hydro expansions and the need for it. On and on the debate goes; and of course it goes on and on here.

I just had the privilege of listening to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who delivered—I want to commend him—one of the most humorous lectures he's ever given in this House in terms of where he sees us going and what is happening. But ordinary people out there are sending us letters and emails, phone calls and faxes about how hydro is affecting them.

I am waiting for the members opposite to stand up and tell me how many letters and phone calls, emails and faxes you are getting from people who say, "Keep doing this. This is wonderful, what's happening to my hydro. This is the best thing you've ever done. My lights aren't going to go out." All the rest that stand here and pontificate on every single day: I would hazard that you haven't received one amongst all of you, because the reality is that people are upset at your policies.

People know that time of use is not working. People know that the smart meters are forcing them to get up in the middle of the night if they want to save money and that time of use from 7 till 10 in the morning, effective as of today, is when you're getting the kids ready to go to school, when you're getting up in the morning. And at nighttime, when you come home after a hard day at the office, you can't turn on too many of your electrical appliances.

Those same people know that the stranded debt is the last thing this government should be putting the HST on. They know, as of today, that the Liberals are being financed by the public utilities that give them tens of thousands of dollars in payments—their money that they pay for the utility going back to the Liberal Party for your electoral fortunes. They know that this whole argument that the Liberals have been making for years, "The NDP wants the lights to go out"—the lights will never go out. The lights will never go out with the electricity that we have available here, not in this generation at least. And they will not go out because we are using less and less electricity.

A good article in yesterday's paper—

Interjection: Nobody's working.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, nobody's working; that's a start.

But a good article in yesterday's paper showed what the hydro forecasters said about the hydro that was going to be required in Ontario that the Liberals bought right into. Then it showed Dr. Keith Stewart, who said, "No, don't listen to them. Hydro use is actually going to decline by 10%." A couple of years later, who was right? Was it all those high-priced hired hydro consultants that the Liberals listened to? Or Dr. Keith Stewart? Well, I'll tell you: It was him.

These same people are telling you again, "Well, this is just a momentary blip. Listen to us. We need to build more and more nuclear reactors. We need to spend all of

this money." Dr. Stewart is to be believed again, because he said that we've only just started with the conservation and that, in fact, in the future we're going to need less electricity, not more. He's absolutely right. That's what has to be said in this debate, and ordinary people across Ontario understand it.

In fact, I want to read a couple of these wonderful emails that we keep getting. I know the government members get them too, because they're copied to them the same as me. Here's one from Unionville. He writes, in part, "Money-grabbing for the electricity time-of-use rates." Just part of his email: "This is totally insane and ridiculous. This change has nothing to do with energy or cost saving; this is purely money-grabbing for a few beneficiaries, those who won the tender of huge contracts to sell the smart meters, and those who installed them. But the major beneficiaries are the electricity distributors and hydro companies (aren't the executives of the hydro companies appointed by the government? Or not?). We all are still paying every month the debt owed by the formerly corrupted or poorly run hydro company decades ago.

"I hope if anyone from the MPP offices or the news media has something to say, please do something and let this government know that we are very, very, very angry. Maybe it's time to move out of this province or change." One guy writes that.

Here's one from East York. The gentleman writes, "I'm writing to ask that you'll vote to remove the HST from our hydro bill.

"In general, I don't have a huge problem with the HST, but taxing something as necessary as electricity seems outrageous. It's clearly an additional burden to Ontario's poor."

Here's another good one: "The HST on hydro is the most unfair tax that I have ever experienced. Our household has always tried to not waste electricity as much as possible but we have to have lighting at night and to keep our food safe to eat and to keep warm in our cold Canadian climate, so no matter how much a person tries to conserve, hydro is essential. This enormous tax grab is just so unbelievable....

"The McGuinty government is a shame to Ontario and they obviously are completely out of touch with reality.

"Ontario is in big trouble and it seems that our complaints are falling on deaf ears.

"We need help soon!"

And the last one: This one is one of my favourites. I stood up and asked a question in the House to the Minister of Energy for this woman some time ago. I got kind of a really bad answer, and she has written back. She writes: "'Note the non-answer' doesn't surprise me! It will go with the 'non-answer' I got in a written letter from the office of Energy Minister Duguid in July 2010. It's becoming very apparent that no one in the entire government wants to provide an honest answer to the question of, 'Is it legal to charge tax on the debt retirement charge?' And the simple fact is that most would say it isn't legal. But they continue to charge us and we continue to pay it.

"The statement given to Mr. Prue by Mr. Duguid the other day is no more than a joke. First, he never answered what was asked of him. Second, what good is a tax credit given in March or April when a senior will be counting their change in the cold winter months to try and find enough funds to pay that month's bill?" Good question.

I ask the members opposite: If you are so sure of what you say, if you think the public is so sure that you are right, why don't you quote a couple of letters that you're getting in support of what you're doing? I hazard a guess it's because not one of you has ever received a letter in support of your government's program on these issues; not one of you. If you have, stand up and I will say I'm sorry, because somebody would have written to you. But I would hazard that no one has written you that kind of letter. They are writing you the same kinds of letters they're writing to me, and all I have to say on their behalf—I agree with them: Your hydro policy is a disgrace, and they are hurting for it.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very, very important issue, an issue that we've been talking about and debating not only in this Legislature but outside among the people as well.

We also know that in order for us to comprehend a very complex issue like this particular one, the full story has to be told, the full story has to be shared. We have to know where we are here today and where we came from. One of the things which has been missing in this whole debate is the full story. I want to take some time to talk about that part of the story because it's extremely important. When I am speaking with my constituents and able to provide the full context, you can see a far better understanding of where things are and where we are going.

Part of the story, of course, is how the system has been developed. Energy is something we don't just create like this; there is a lot of investment that goes into energy, and there has been a lot of experimentation with our energy system to ensure that we have the capacity, that it is affordable and available to both our homes and our businesses, because it's also critical for the economy of the province.

We know what the previous government tried to do, and I think that is a very important part of the story. At one point, the previous government wanted to privatize energy. I think a lot of us recall the kind of debate that took place in this province as result of that policy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You guys put privatization on steroids.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Madam Speaker, I never heckle members. I would appreciate that the same respect is given to me. Thank you very much. I'm sure the member will have an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm sorry.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Apology accepted.

There was an effort to privatize the system, and there was a lot of hue and cry.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Who's building generation now?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Wow. That was all of two seconds of politeness that was granted to me.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: There was an effort to privatize the system. There was a lot of debate, and the government retracted. Then they decided, "Okay, we will deregulate the system," and a very complex mechanism was put in place. This was all being done by the previous Conservative government. There was still a lot of angst in the province; there was still a lot of uneasiness as to what would happen to our system as a result.

So what did the government do? Because it was nearing an election, they put on a rate freeze in order to calm people. The result of their rate freeze was a \$1-billion deficit to the system. I often get asked, "What is this debt retirement charge?" I think all of you get asked the same question. That's what the debt retirement charge is. We're trying to pay off that \$1-billion deficit that was put on the system because of an ill-conceived, ill-thought-out rate freeze.

So this current government is trying to bring some semblance of order to a very complex system, and one of the very first points in that is to ensure that we invest in our system, to ensure that we have sound generation and distribution, not to mention cleaning up the system. By "cleaning up," I mean to ensure that we are not relying on dirty sources of energy. I can tell you one thing: In my riding of Ottawa Centre, there is a lot of support not only for conservation but also green sources of energy, for renewable energy sources. Constituent after constituent speaks to me about the need for investment in energy being created through wind and through solar. This is what the McGuinty government has been focusing on: to ensure that we have a system in place that not only meets the needs and supplies the demands of the province, but also results in a cleaner environment.

Of course we know that that's not cheap. If it was cheap, everybody would have been doing it. Of course it has a cost component to it, but it is important for the future well-being of our province, for our children and for our families. I'm very proud that we are making investments in renewable resources of energy and that we are using wind and solar and other sources of renewable energy as a way to create energy in this province.

Other issues around cost: Besides making a tremendous amount of investments—and I think they're in the range of \$8 billion or so in the last seven years—we have made sure that, as part of the tax reform package, we also brought very significant personal income tax cuts for low-income families, which the opposition parties, including the NDP, voted against.

We also are introducing a very significant Ontario energy and property tax credit, which is aimed directly at seniors and families on a low income. That is a very

important investment, and I want to see how the opposition and the third party are going to be voting on that important initiative.

There are mechanisms being put in place to ensure that we provide targeted help for the most vulnerable in our community, at the same time ensuring that we're building sound, safe, reliable and clean sources of energy right here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the opposition day motion. I'm not going to go through a lot of the debate items that have been covered already. I'd just like to read a number of letters from my constituents that I received just recently, as I knew this debate was coming up today.

I also would like to say that I didn't need to do any high-priced polling. I spent four days at the International Plowing Match talking to people all over southwestern Ontario and also four days at the Bridgen Fair. I know exactly that people from all income strata—middle-income, low-income, more affluent, young, old and in between—are all against this HST on energy, and they made that loud and clear.

I'm sure that the government members and the backbenchers must be hearing the same thing. I, like the member from Beaches–East York, would like to see them bring in those letters that they received in support of this, if they actually received any.

Anyway, here's a letter to me:

"Good day, Mr. Bailey,

"I am writing in regard to today's debate on HST.... We're in times when the Liberal government is asking everyone to tighten their belts. It's hard tightening our belts when the Liberals are using the same belts around our necks to choke us. As a former" Liberal "party member myself, my opinion is, the HST is a burden much too huge for the Ontario people. I ask that you convey my concerns during debate today."

From Kieth and Janet Gark: "I would appreciate and expect that you will vote to drop the HST on electricity cost during Monday's debate. I know a lot of people who are really struggling now. This is the wrong time to charge this...." That's from Mr. Kieth Gark, from Ryan Street.

From Gary Nicholls: "I understand that a debate will take place this coming Monday at Queen's Park as to whether or not we should pay the harmonized sales tax on our hydro bills. I am counting on you to support your constituency and vote against applying the HST to our already-too-high hydro bills."

Here's one from a Jodi Huerter: "Monday, starting at about 1:30, you and other politicians at Queen's Park will debate whether the HST should be eliminated from hydro bills. I urge and expect you to fight for the removal of the HST from hydro bills." That was Ms. Huerter.

"Bob,

"By way of introduction"—this is Mr. Keith Murray from Camlachie. "I am strongly opposed to the HST

being applied to hydro bills.... The HST is only making a bad situation worse.... We ship garbage to Michigan to be land-filled and use valuable farm land" to operate disposal sites. Please speak up and rescind the HST on energy.

"Hello Mr. Bailey,

"I feel very strongly that utilities" should be "exempt from PST....

"My water bill is outrageous, and I honestly don't know how the city of Sarnia" brought in such a huge increase.

"The HST has caused undue stress on our family"—this is from Jessie and Ron Hillier. Please vote to remove the HST.

"I'm writing to advise you of our disgust with the HST being applied to hydro bills." That's from Bob and Lavinia Dickenson.

I'm going to close with one quote that someone said one time, and I think it's pretty appropriate today. It's not that this Liberal government knows so little; the problem is, they know so much that isn't true.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

1520

Mr. John Yakabuski: I thought maybe there would still be some folks on the government side who wanted to talk on this bill, but they're probably a little bit gun-shy. They're probably as interested in talking as the public is interested in sending those thank-you cards out to them for imposing the HST on hydro.

I just want to talk a little bit historically about this HST and this GST and all of these STs. The Liberal members like to talk about how they're going in their ridings and they're saying the HST was forced upon them by the federal government. Well, the reality is that every federal government of all parties has always sought a harmonization of the collection of sales taxes. However, they have left it up to the provinces. Back in the Chrétien government days, they approached the Ontario government of the day and said, "We want you to have a harmonized sales tax," and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves said no because it would have applied to too many things.

Premier McGuinty saw a tremendous opportunity with the HST, a real cash cow for this Liberal government. In the negotiations of the CITCA agreement—and it is very important that people understand this—the decision as to what to apply the new tax on was absolutely at the discretion of the province imposing the HST. The McGuinty government had every option on the table, and it was totally their decision as to what to apply the HST to. There was no requirement for them to impose it on any products that were not previously subject to the provincial sales tax.

What we saw here, and what is hurting seniors, families and people all across this province to the most dire degree, is the products and the services on which Dalton McGuinty's government decided to put those taxes on, some of the things that you simply cannot get away from. If you're living in Ontario today and you own

a home or you rent, either directly or indirectly you will pay for hydro. If you have a vehicle, you will pay for gasoline. If you have a home of any kind, you will pay to heat it with gas or home heating oil if you're not heating it already with hydro. Those are three essential things that you cannot get away from spending on here in the province of Ontario. Premier McGuinty had the options in front of him as to whether or not to extend the HST to those products, and this is what galls people across this province. It was their decision—he and the finance minister and the members of the Liberal cabinet—alone to extend the HST to those products. They could have said no. They had the option of saying no. However, they were so terribly addicted to the revenue and addicted to the taxpayers' pockets that they could not resist it. It shows a bit of another side to the Premier. He is not going to have trouble paying the HST on hydro or gasoline or heating. And, dare I say, no member of this House is going to be on the soup line because of the HST on their hydro or their gasoline or their home heating. But there are an awful lot of people out there in Ontario who, because of the imposition of this HST on those essential products, are suffering badly.

I was at an event on the weekend and I was talking to a couple of seniors, and they said, "How can it be right that our pensions go up by next to nothing"—and I know, in fairness, that there have been some tax changes, and they're going to talk about singing the praises of their tax rebates for seniors and other taxpayers in this province. But they don't even come close to balancing the pain that is being inflicted on those groups as a result of the imposition of the HST.

My friend from Ottawa Centre wanted to talk about the Green Energy Act and how they had to raise the hydro because they had to pay for the changes in the electricity system. Well, George Smitherman, before he left his House, repeated it over and over and over again. He said that the Green Energy Act is going to add 1% per year to your hydro bills. We all know, now that George is gone, that that just wasn't the case. That just wasn't the case. But the pain remains, and the pain of the HST is going to be with people for an awfully long time.

As I say, if the Premier would have looked into the eyes of a couple of seniors—another couple of seniors said to me, "We just don't know if we can continue to live in our homes."

I was also speaking to a young couple in Chatham earlier this year, back in the summertime, late summer. You know what they said to me? The government and the former Minister of Revenue used to go on and on about, "It's going to create 591,000"—they round it up 600,000—"jobs." I was talking to these folks in Chatham. They have two small kids. That was in the summertime, and you'll note that our dollar is a little higher today than it was in the summertime. You know what she said to me? She said, "We have already made up our minds that we're going to be doing an awful lot more of our shopping in the United States. We're going to be planning and making our trips to the United States and that's where we're going to be spending our dollars,

because we can't afford to live in this province under this regime any longer because of the imposition of the HST on essential services, on essential goods."

The choice could have been made. First, they started to sell this thing as revenue-neutral. That was the biggest crock of you-know-what in the history of politics. Now they're saying they're trying to balance it off. Well, it won't balance it off. The people are paying and they're paying dearly. They could have made the choice and said, "If you really want to make this revenue-neutral, we're only going to impose the HST on products that were previously taxed at the provincial level." That would have been revenue-neutral; that would have been true tax reform. They chose to go for the kill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: We've heard a lot of pointed comments in this debate this afternoon, but I think we also have to keep in this debate the bigger picture in our mind.

The HST is a piece of a larger proposal of a tax reform package. Why are we bringing that tax reform package to fruition? It's because we have an absolute obligation as legislators to do what we can to shore up and make healthy again Ontario's manufacturing sector. All economists, business persons, chambers of commerce and leading unions all recognize that if we don't get Ontario's manufacturing economy back on a stronger footing, our schools are going to suffer, our health care is going to suffer, our universities are going to suffer, and our roads and bridges are going to suffer. So it's a comprehensive tax package, and it's not responsible for the third party to attack a narrow piece of it and, in that attack, not put forth all the facts on the table.

I've said it's a comprehensive tax package. One of the pieces in the comprehensive tax reform package is that 740,000 seniors are going to get an increase in the tax relief that's available to them. We haven't heard one peep from the third party about the tax relief increases that those 740,000 seniors, for instance, are going to get, along with many, many other Ontarians.

1530

For the record, let me just walk through, in about five or six points, the details of the tax relief that, in this case, 740,000 seniors are going to receive. First of all, again, the comprehensive tax reform package: There's something called the Ontario seniors' energy and property tax credit: \$1,025. The next piece, the seniors' property tax grant: That's \$500. Then the permanent Ontario sales tax credit, which goes to everyone in the province, including, of course, seniors: That's \$260.

Then we have an additional point here, the transition payments. That's \$1,000 for a couple or \$300 for a single. If you're a senior couple, with your spouse or your partner, you are going to receive an increased tax credit here in Ontario of \$2,785. If you're a single senior Ontarian, you're going to receive an increased tax credit of \$2,185. Those are significant amounts of money.

This government realizes that in this comprehensive tax reform package, there are certain transitions that are

going to have to be made. These transitions that I've just outlined in detail, amounting to \$2,785 for a senior couple or \$2,185 for a senior single, are designed to assist them to make the transition on that one piece of this comprehensive tax package, the HST piece, and some other pieces.

So we come back to the question: Why are we asking Ontarians to work with us on this comprehensive tax package? The reason is, all good-thinking Ontarians and all good-thinking members of this Legislature recognize their legal responsibility, their economic responsibility and I say their moral responsibility to get Ontario's economy on a solid footing.

To do that we have to restore and reinvigorate, essentially, the manufacturing industry. To do that, we've got to create a regime where those industries can compete nationally and internationally. If we don't get it right, if we don't get that piece right in the years coming in Ontario's manufacturing sector, our economy will be so weak that we won't be able to support those things that we all agree on: schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, senior citizens' care, long-term care.

In fact, the comprehensive tax reform package, of which the HST is a piece, makes such sense that I can't help but note for the record an endorsement, or a statement about it, made by one Ken Lewenza, who is the president of the Canadian Auto Workers of Canada, someone not unknown to the third party. I quote from a speech that Mr. Lewenza made in December 2009 at the Sheraton Hotel to the Canadian Auto Workers council. He said, and it specifically relates to the leader of the third party's thinking on this issue: "I said to the Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, 'Andrea, the harmonized sales tax ... cannot be an issue from the progressive side.'"

He endorsed the comprehensive tax package, including the HST, because he knows that on behalf of the union that he represents, the CAW, it makes sense for his members, because it will do more for them to ensure their jobs in the future than just about anything else this province can do. That is our comprehensive tax reform package. The HST is a piece of that.

It's a disservice to the debate for the leader of the third party just—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is with pleasure that I rise to support this motion. For the record, the motion is quite simple. It says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to immediately remove the HST from all hydro bills." Nothing could be simpler. I am amazed at some of the speeches that we've heard coming from the government benches.

I just want to make a couple of very quick points. Hopefully, I can save about a minute and a half for my friend from Nickel Belt, who wants to say a word on this as well.

First of all, the government is saying, "This is a complex issue." "Complex? My bill went up. It's simple; I'm paying more for hydro than I ever have before," says the

average citizen in Ontario. So when the government stands and says, "Oh, you should be happy that your bill went up because this is a complex issue, and we found ourselves a solution," all I know, from the perspective of the bill payers in Ontario, is that this is not a complex issue; this is all about you putting your hands in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. They're feeling that they're getting gouged every time they get a hydro bill because of the HST being added to the bill, because of the smart meters and all kinds of other things that you've done.

You say, "Oh, my God, we're just fixing the hydro system. It was the NDP and it was the Conservatives who broke the system before us." All I know is that when I left office and when the Tories left office, hydro bills were a lot less. Yes, the Conservative government dabbled in privatization and other things, but under your watch hydro has gone up significantly, to the point that industry and everybody's hydro bill have been affected.

But you say that you have to fix the system. All I'm saying to you is, first of all, we don't need your fix. It's too darned expensive. We see it on our hydro bills every day. And, second, the very fact that you've got to give a tax credit to citizens in order to afford your increased hydro rates is an admission that hydro rates have gone up too high.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to leave about two minutes, by the look of it, so you'd better get up there. I was signalling for you to go, and you weren't moving.

I just say to the government across the way: We can't afford your fix. Hydro bills have gone through the roof. We're hearing it everywhere across Ontario. As my friend Mr. Prue pointed out, if you think this is so popular, bring out all the emails and letters that you've received saying that this is a great thing, and maybe we'll listen to you. The reason you haven't is because everybody knows they've been whacked, as my friend Rosario Marchese says, when it comes to hydro bills in the province of Ontario.

I want to end on this point, because I know Madame France Gélinas will speak to this as well. I heard the member just recently say, "But we need the HST in order to fix the resource industry in Ontario. The HST will put people back to work." In my riding, they closed the largest employer in town, Xstrata refinery and copper. Why? Because the hydro rates went through the roof. It's the case across this province. If you're in a paper mill, you're a heavy industrial user of electricity, you're shutting your plant down to move to Quebec or Manitoba, where the electricity prices are much, much lower.

I will vote with Andrea Horwath on this because it's the right thing to do. I encourage the Liberals to do what's right for once in seven years and vote for something that makes some sense: to give people relief when it comes to their hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to add a little bit of a perspective from the north. Like my colleague, I also deal

with a lot of people who work in the forestry sector. The forestry sector has been decimated. It's really, really hard to stay in business, and if they stayed in business, this HST on your hydro bill is about to kill the few of them who survive.

I want to give the example of Fryer Forest Products, which is by the French River in the south end of my riding. They're barely hanging in, and then comes the hydro bill and then comes the HST. We are about to lose 120 jobs in the French River area, where there are no other jobs. There are no part-time jobs to be had; there are no minimum wage jobs to be had; there is no Walmart, no Costco. You're talking the French River, where you either work in the forestry sector or you own a lodge and you have tourism. That's it; there are no other jobs.

Well, 120 jobs—think about it—in an area that has 3,000 people. This is huge. To risk this so that we can put HST on a hydro bill doesn't make any sense.

I looked in the north of my riding, in Mattagami and Gogama. They also rely on the forestry industry. This ever-increasing cost of hydro is putting this fragile recovery in the forestry sector in peril. We have an opportunity right here, right now this afternoon to change all this, to secure this fragile recovery so that we see forestry settle on its feet and maybe bloom again in northern Ontario, which we all hope will happen. It is easy. Take the HST off the hydro bill. It would help those little entrepreneurs, it will help the forestry industry settle on its feet and, more particularly, it will protect 120 jobs in the French River, jobs that we won't be able to replace if those are gone. The HST on hydro is about to tip the balance the wrong way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The time allotted for debate has expired.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1541 to 1551.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain risen while the clerks name them.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Naqvi, Yasir
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Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Oraziotti, David
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Sousa, Charles
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 23; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare that the motion is lost.

Motion negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. You will recall that I was well into my 20 minutes on this bill when the bill was last before the House.

It is noisy in here, isn't it, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute, please. I'm having a very hard time hearing the member from Welland. Will those who are staying stay and those who are leaving leave, please? Those who are staying: please, order.

Member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I was loath to make those comments myself. I'm pleased that you did.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's because you're not the Speaker.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, because I'm a rather shy, retiring person. Please, Ms. Wynne, come on. Wishful thinking.

We were well into my 20 minutes on this, and I'm not sure, but I don't think that I had made reference to the recent Ontario poll that showed that 76% of Ontarians would like to see another party in power, other than the Liberals, and 86% say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Those are pretty bad numbers

even on a good day. Let's assume that there's a four-point margin of error. That means that it could be that only 72% think another party should be in power; or it could mean that 80% think another party should be in power. We haven't seen these types of numbers or this type of dramatic free fall in a long, long time.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Since 1995.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Somebody said "1995," when Liberal Bob Rae was leading the NDP, and I say, some of us managed to save ourselves. When you're looking at numbers like 76%, you're talking about devastation. These are the kinds of numbers that got Jean Charest and—who was the other Conservative elected federally? Ms. Campbell?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Elsie Wayne.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was Elsie Wayne—reduced to two members in the caucus; two. People said it was impossible. It was shocking. But there were two people who saved themselves—dramatic, dramatic numbers. I liked Ms. Wayne. I liked Jean Charest. I liked him better when he was a Conservative than when he was a Liberal. But that's where we're at.

We've had this shocking revelation for a few weeks now here at Queen's Park. Ms. Horwath and the New Democrats have been coming to question period for two weeks now with news about all sorts of public monies being diverted from colleges and universities, being diverted from health care and being spent on high-priced, well-connected, politically tuned-in, politically connected-at-the-hip lobbyists and consultants. Then we learn today in question period that hydroelectric utilities have been greasing the Liberal Party to the tune of thousands of dollars per utility.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Zimmer responds. He can't believe it. He finds it remarkable. It boggles the mind. I can hear his mind boggling as we speak, that his party, the Liberal Party, would be taking electricity ratepayers' premiums and then diverting them to political party funding, to wit, for the Liberals. As if it weren't bad enough that we don't have electricity rates already going through the roof, to go yet higher because of not-so-smart meters, and that we have the cost of electricity already skyrocketing, heightened by the Liberal HST, this brand new tax on electricity, electricity ratepayers, electricity users who are paying the highest prices for electricity in their lifetimes, are now learning that a whole lot of that money they wanted to use to pay for the electricity bill is being provided as political donations to Mr. McGuinty's Liberal Party here in the province of Ontario. That is indeed shocking stuff. I know because I have the radio on in the background in my office. I'm listening to newscasters, I'm listening to radio talk shows, and people are outraged by what they learned today on the heels of all of the scandalous news that has occupied the airwaves over the last two or three weeks around this issue alone. It's a real problem, and that's why the committee hearings are going to be so delightful with respect to this bill. However, it could well be that the Liberal government will

use its brute force, as its current majority allows it, to curtail any meaningful committee hearings. The minister and Premier, on the one hand, say that oh, my goodness, the minister is shocked; she's overcome. She's got the vapours, if you will, from learning that there are these high-priced consultants and lobbyists being hired by schools and universities and by hospitals. Who does she think she's been talking to while she's been Minister of Health—people who wandered in off the street, people who are out for their daily constitutional, and figure, "I'll drop in and see the Minister of Health and maybe talk to her about the hospital where my kid lives," up in wherever it might be? Who does she think she's been talking to when she goes to \$300, \$400, \$500 meet-the-minister soirees that the lobbyists organize?

1600

For the lobby industry, political fundraising for the Liberals is going to get pretty darned difficult. These lobbyists that are peddling cabinet ministers and the occasional Premier are sort of like—"pimping" would be an interesting word to use because what they're doing is charging money to get your hand shaken by a cabinet minister or a Premier. Of course, the money is, in largest part, fundraising for the Liberal Party, but it's also a whole lot of commission off the top for the lobbyist. The lobbyist insists that if it weren't for lobbyists and it weren't for consultants, I presume—

Interruption.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Is that Mr. O'Toole's cellphone ringing?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, you can deal with the cellphone problem very easily. I suspect there are a few less people twitting or tweeting or twittering in the chamber this week after the revelations last week about the Minister of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Research and Innovation.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —Research and Innovation. He was innovative, all right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He was having a late-night meeting.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes. In any event, you could ban those electronic devices, because they have no business being here in the chamber.

What's going to be interesting is that the lobbyists are going to be coming to the committee saying, "No, the public doesn't understand, and the minister doesn't understand. This government, the Liberal government, Dalton McGuinty's government, is inaccessible. That's why they need us lobbyists."

Minister Matthews says, "Why, just call me any time." She didn't offer up her cellphone number on to Hansard, but I presume it's available somewhere. It's maybe on her website. You can call her home number and her cellphone number after hours and so on.

The minister says, "No, you don't need lobbyists and consultants to contact your government. Just call us." We know that's not true. Use MPPs as lobbyists? There are some people here who are very capable of doing that; there are a few others—I won't name names—whom I

wouldn't trust with my local dog pound, never mind my local hospital.

Please. The lack of sincerity here is overwhelming, but somebody's not telling the truth, and we know that. Either the minister is not telling the truth or the lobbyists aren't. That's why the committee hearings are going to help us discover which—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would ask the member to withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I withdraw that, of course, and I withdraw anything else in advance that I say that's unparliamentary.

We're going to find out what's going on if the government allows committee hearings, but then again, they may not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am shocked, absolutely shocked, to discover today that the leader of the NDP has accepted \$1,000 from Union Gas, meaning that the consumers of Union Gas paid for her political leadership campaign in 2009; that the NDP accepted a donation from Enwave; that the NDP took a \$7,000 donation from Suncor. But imagine this: Despite all of that, the foundations of democracy in the province of Ontario stood tall. We managed.

I say to my esteemed colleague, indeed in many ways my role model from Welland, someone whom I absolutely really enjoy following, a blacker pot has not cast aspersions upon a kettle.

In the seven years and change that I have had the privilege and the responsibility of working on behalf the folks in western Mississauga, in our neighbourhoods of Meadowvale and Streetsville and Lisgar, I've seen some lobbyists from trade associations, and I've seen some lobbyists representing clients in the private sector, but never from my hospital, never from my electricity distribution company, never from my gas distribution company, never from my community care access centre, never from the region and never from any partner that takes or uses public sector funds. They don't need to. They all know that they can pick up the telephone and they can call me up as their MPP. They can call up any of my colleagues as their MPP. When they make a call to us, our telephone gets answered, and their calls get returned. We do our business, and we make the system work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Welland is always informative and also entertaining and brings a lot of insight, I think, into the debate of the day in terms of this particular one, and I do commend him.

Anyone who cites someone else's faults should also take a look at their own. No one here is perfect, but I think we're all, each day—if you look at today, I think there were three themes of the day that all involved some sort of consultant doing some kind of work. At the end of the day, the three groups that I was aware—today is the network on literacy week. The theme is gender and the

media. There's a lobby group that worked that campaign. There's another group here today, on chronic pain—I think they had a reception—and also another group, from my riding, about the diet that's allowed for a person on social assistance.

I think when you look at it, we're all influenced by it, so I think it's wrong to point fingers. There are probably legitimate roles for some of those to educate us. How it's done, often, is really what's in question here.

Certainly, in the public's mind, hospitals and the way the current system is set up under the local health integration networks—we find that we have a group lobbying a group that's lobbying a group, and actually you can't get to see the Minister of Health. That probably is where this thing really came to a head, when we had hospitals hiring lobbyists, if you will—consultant groups—to get to the minister, when in fact they're supposed to go through the LHIN. The LHIN was set up, really, as a filter against getting to the minister.

It seems rather redundant and certainly a waste of money when in fact we have people and children and elderly people waiting to get into long-term care and for other access to treatment. It's a waste of money in a public service that's underfunded today.

It's a complex issue, but certainly this government brings a bill in—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Would that all members were like my friend from Welland, because if they were, we would put lobbyists out of business in no time flat. Would that the member from Welland were a minister in that portfolio. Lobbyists would be out of business in no time at all.

I support his call for hearings, because we need to hear from the lobbyists. They'll be there, and they'll be there in great numbers, extolling their virtues and talking about why they need to be there: because they have a job to do. You'll hear them. I think the government and the opposition members need to hear that point of view. I think the government wants to hear that point of view, and it's for that reason that I believe, contrary to my friend from Welland, that there will be hearings, because they'll want to hear them as much as we do.

I want to be able to hear some of those folks talk about whether or not this bill has any loopholes in it, because we believe there are. We know that if you are receiving private dollars, you can hire whoever you want. You can name them whatever you want, you can hire whoever you want and they'll be carrying on as if nothing ever happened before. But the government will have the luxury of saying, "We got rid of lobbyists. They ain't going to be able to do what they did before, no siree, no, because of this bill, G122."

The fact of the matter is, this bill doesn't get rid of them. It just says that if you're getting public dollars, you won't be able to do what you used to do, but if you get private dollars, continue doing what you've always done, and God bless.

I congratulate the member from Welland. I'm looking forward to those hearings, and I'm looking forward to the minister saying, "We're happy to have them."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I too am shocked at the leader of the third party for some of her ad hominem attacks on this issue when I see that it turns out she herself received \$1,000 from Union Gas for her leadership race and several thousand dollars from Enwave Energy and Suncor. A public utility, Five Nations Energy: \$1,200 to her NDP campaigns—Five Nations Energy. That's a non-profit public utility owned by the Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Kashechewan Nations. Imagine taking money from those public utilities, owned by aboriginal groups.

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But it's not surprising that I hear these comments from the leader of the third party. When I hear her speak with this feigned anger, shock and frustration, I'm reminded of the quote, "Methinks the lady doth protest too much," or even a better one: "You shouldn't throw stones if you live in a glass house."

Compare that to our Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It's comprehensive; it covers lobbying in any form or nature from those organizations that are receiving public monies to operate, because the principle is, you ought not to take money that you receive from the government to hire people to ask the government to give you more money.

Everybody agrees that's the right thing to do, the lobbyists themselves feel that's the right thing to do and certainly the institutions feel it's the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Aw, I wish I had 20—I need it—because you've got to understand that the last speaker, the parliamentary assistant, was less than accurate in his interpretation of the legislation. You see, it only covers lobbyists who are consultant lobbyists, and that is to say lobbyists who are retained on contract. It specifically says that it doesn't cover in-house lobbyists. The lobby industry is already planning its campaign to discuss with all schools, hospitals and municipalities—and the government knows this because they designed the bill to accommodate lobbyists being hired as in-house lobbyists, in-house government relations people. So there's going to be no less money spent.

The bill also makes it very clear that you can't spend public monies—to wit, the money you receive from the government—to pay for a lobbyist. Not only will it permit and encourage high-priced in-house lobbyists, but it very specifically will include lobbyists who are paid for out of funds other than funds provided specifically by the government. So the lobbyists who organize the fundraising for the hospital will then argue that the money they raised fundraising with your local gala—or what do they call it; people play golf and do all sorts of things—the lobbyists will say, "Well, look, this is why this is being done: so that you can hire us to lobby for you with a government that's inaccessible." Lobbyists

insist that they're imperative. They're the grease that makes the wheels turn.

The bill is very, very narrow and not very restrictive at all. Please read the bill; read the legislation. It ain't rocket science. The government has conveniently accommodated lobbyists and consultants of all stripes, all sizes, all shapes, and at all sorts of expense. The lobbyists and consultants will continue to drain money away from education, from health care, from municipal services, and will pour money into the coffers of the Ontario Liberal Party.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have 20 minutes this afternoon to put some remarks on the record with regard to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. Before I get into my personal remarks, I just want to read a bit of the formality of what it is that this legislation is going to do.

As we know, the Auditor General brought in his report on October 20, and on the same day, our Minister Deb Matthews introduced this particular piece of legislation. If passed, this is what the legislation is going to do. It's going to prohibit all agencies, designated broader public sector organizations, hydro entities and most organizations that receive more than \$10 million in public funds from using public funds to retain lobbyists. It's going to increase accountability in the broader public sector by requiring some of the broader public sector entities and organizations to follow standards established by the Management Board of Cabinet on procurement. It's going to require each LHIN and hospital to submit a report on its use of consultants. It's going to require each LHIN and hospital to post on their public websites information about their expense claims. It's going to require each broader public sector org to comply with regs, if any, which require the public posting of expenses. Additionally, it's going to establish expense claim rules for designated broader public sector orgs and guidelines for publicly funded organizations, and also increase accountability and transparency in hospitals and LHINs by requiring the head of the organization to annually submit a report to the minister attesting to the completion and accuracy of reports required on the use of consultants, the organization's compliance with the prohibition of retaining a lobbyist using public funds, the organization's compliance with procurement directives issued by Management Board, and the organization's compliance with the expense claim directives issued by Management Board. Finally, subject to passing, it will make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012. That's what Bill 122 is going to do.

Now I would like to spend just a bit of time letting people following this debate on television know how it is that we arrived here. It has probably been mentioned before, but it bears mentioning again.

Some years ago, when we first were elected to government, it was we as a Liberal government that expanded the authority of the Auditor General to in fact

give the auditor this authority that has led to the report that has come to us today. Previous to that, the auditor could not have investigated LHINs, he could not have investigated hospitals, and the report that's before us, that has led to this legislation, is something that we would not have been able to see. Perhaps when the opposition parties have an opportunity to speak further on this bill, they'll explain why, when they had the opportunity and the privilege to be government in the province of Ontario, they did not extend that same authority to the Auditor General. As we know, as a result of that, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—they went off and they used this new authority, and the report that he tabled led us to where we are today. That is our government's response: Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

At its core, at its heart, what the legislation is about is transparency and accountability. Like all members, I took a keen interest in the municipal elections that occurred in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, the city of Thunder Bay and the surrounding municipalities in my riding. I can tell you that the issues of transparency and accountability were on the lips of most people, on the lips of most candidates. Whether or not it is justified, it seems like in municipalities there is an interest with the voters that all orders of government, be they municipal, provincial or federal, need to be more transparent, more accountable than they currently are being. Whether or not it's the case, people feel it, and they want to see it. This legislation is responding to that, as I said.

There are a few things that I want to talk about briefly that when we think about transparency and accountability are not items that the electorate would probably consider or think about. But they are issues that, as a government, we've addressed. Before I get to the more formal list—and that's a relatively expansive list, a list that in fact members of the opposition voted against when we tried to provide a little bit of sunshine and to provide more transparency and accountability. I'll get to that list later. But I have a few things as examples that I want to illustrate for people following this debate on TV that we in fact did years ago, long before this issue got us to the point that we're at today.

Number one: In the election of 2003, as an example of our government commitment to more transparency and more accountability, we came in, and the voters may remember that in very short order, the auditor of the day had identified that we had inherited a \$5.5-billion deficit. Going into the election of 2003, the opposition party today, the government of the day at that time, was clearly articulating to the electorate that the books were balanced, and maybe that there was a little surplus—I don't remember if they were saying there was a surplus or not. But clearly they were articulating that there was no deficit. When we came in, an auditor number, not a government number, indicated that there was indeed a \$5.5-billion deficit.

What did we do in response? We brought in legislation that ensured that can never happen again. So from now on, going into every provincial election, the Auditor

General will provide a snapshot of the finances of the province so that, going into the election, the electorate will know exactly what the state of the books of the province of Ontario is. We did that. That's extremely transparent and that's being extremely accountable, I would suggest. That's one of the things we did. We did that probably five or six years ago.

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October 6 next year, 2011, there will be a provincial election. Premier McGuinty and our government brought in legislation—only the second province in Canada to do so—establishing fixed election days. We can all tell around this place that the election has long since started. We can tell by the tenor of the debate. We can tell by the tone of the debate. In fact, the official opposition is running television commercials all the time already. Had they not known that there was going to be an election on October 6 of next year, I don't imagine they'd be running those TV commercials now, but the target is there, the focus is there. As a government, we brought in that legislation. By so doing, the Premier and the government of the day gave up quite a bit of power, I would say, in terms of the ability to pick the election date to best suit the purposes of the government of the day. We gave that up. Now it's transparent. You can't manipulate the timing of the election to best serve your own purposes. That's next year. That'll be the second such time that's occurred under our watch.

A third thing that I think people don't often think about when it comes to transparency and accountability refers back to the election of 2003, as well. I mentioned this last week in a two-minuter in response to one of the other members' speeches. In 2003, the election results came in and the third party, the NDP, elected eight members to the Legislature. To have official party status in the Legislature, according to the standing rules, I think it was 12 that you needed. They did not have official party status. Our government changed the rules. We amended the standing orders to accommodate the eight members from the third party that were here, and by so doing, I think we flowed about \$1 million in resource to the eight members representing the third party here so that they could play a vigorous role in terms of trying to represent the interests of their constituents to the people of the province of Ontario. We didn't have to do that, but we did it. Along with that, I think the leader of the third party at the time also got a \$30,000 or \$40,000 raise. I can't remember for sure. But \$1 million of resource went to the third party. We changed the rule. We didn't have to do that. They had eight members elected. The rule said you have to have 12 to be an official party to get all that resource. We did it. I think of that in terms of transparency. I think of that in terms of accountability. I don't know if other people do, but I think that's pretty significant.

For the last little while in this place, the opposition parties have been having some fun when it comes to the LHINs, local health integration networks. They've become a bit of a bureaucratic, political piñata. They're taking their turns whacking their big stick against the

LHINs. Apparently, they've decided that the LHIN organizations, as part of the health care system in Ontario, are going to be one of the issues that they plant their ideological flags on as they go into the next election on October 6, 2011. They're going to use this as something to exhibit to the people of the province that we fumbled health care, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. I'm not sure why they're going there. They think it's an easy one to do.

I want to tell you where I come from on the LHINs. I remember when I was first elected, one of the things the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan disliked the most was they felt that the people in the south didn't get it when it came to decision-making on a lot of issues, especially health care. With the centralized bureaucracy that existed in Ontario with the Ministry of Health, they thought that all the decision-making authority rested here in southern Ontario, in Toronto, and that all of those decisions oftentimes did not reflect, did not consider, did not understand, did not get, the reality of what was northern Ontario. People would come into my office on a regular basis with that complaint. They said, "They don't get it."

So when we rolled out LHINs three or four years ago—and if people want to stand in their place and say that they're not doing a good job, they need to get better, they're still evolving, they're only about three years old, they want to cast some criticism and say they can do better, I'm okay with that. That's fine. But it sounds to me like the opposition parties want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I assume they're going to cancel them. If they had the opportunity and the privilege to represent the people of the province of Ontario in government, it sounds to me like they would throw them out, cancel them.

What would it mean if they do that? Well, back to the way it was, I suppose—back to recentralizing all the decision-making in southern Ontario; taking the decision-making away, in my context, from the North West LHIN headquartered in the city of Thunder Bay, representing my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. They want to take all of the decision-making away from them and put it back here in southern Ontario. I don't favour that. They want to take all the jobs back, they want to take all the investment back, they want to take all the power and the authority back and put it down here in Toronto. I don't favour that.

You want to tell me the LHINs aren't working as well as they should? Fair game. Let's make them better, but I don't want to get rid of them. What's next? You want to get rid of the LHINs and bring all the authority and decision-making back down here on health care? Do you want to do it for education, too? School boards and trustees, are we going to get rid of them as well so that their local impact on decision-making in northwestern Ontario and in Thunder Bay is the same? We'll bring all that decision-making back down here to southern Ontario and put all that in Toronto as well? I don't get it.

They've decided that LHINs, as I've said, are going to be this bureaucratic, political piñata. They have been for

about six months or a year, and I guess going forward into the next election it's going to stay that way for a while. God bless. But I'll tell you, as somebody who represents a northern Ontario riding, I don't favour it. If they're not working perfectly, that's okay; you can make that criticism. There have been times when I've been sitting in my office and watching some of the communications that come out. I pause and think as well and find that it's not perfect. But I'm very interested in people in Thunder Bay, in Atikokan, in Oliver Paipooonge, in Marathon, in Manitouwadge, having some control and input through their LHIN, through that board of directors, in terms of local decision-making and in terms of how those billions of dollars that we invest in health care are spent.

When I was first elected, stakeholder after stakeholder would come into my office and complain about the fact that, historically, hospitals in the province of Ontario would always overspend their budgets and the government of the day, no matter who it was, would always accommodate that over-expenditure and they would find the money to keep funnelling it into the hospitals. All of those other health care stakeholders who delivered services in the province of Ontario would feel like they were constantly getting short-changed and did not have enough money to deliver the services as they saw fit or as they wished they could have.

What do the LHINs do? One of the things we let the LHINs do is sign accountability agreements with their hospitals. So now they go in on an annual basis. The hospitals know you get X, you sign on the dotted line and you don't get any more. If you go over, we've got a problem. The other health care providers who get some of that \$45 billion that we spend every year on health care in the province of Ontario—which, by the way, is \$15 billion more per year than when we came in, in 2003—now those other health care providers like that. They get it. That's one of the authorities that the LHINs have. So they set that standard. They set the template and they help with that sort of decision-making and keep it local, and they can send those resources where they think they're best needed. Are they perfect? No, they're not. That's not a criticism; that's an observation.

One of the things that we brought back when it comes to transparency and accountability is freedom of information. My friend across the way from Durham—I'm interested in sharing this one with him, and perhaps if he does a two-minuter, he can explain it to me, because I'm not sure why they did this. We brought back freedom-of-information accessibility to Hydro One and OPG. I didn't say we gave access to Hydro One and OPG, I said we had to give it back to them, which of course implies that they used to have it but somebody took it away. Why would somebody take freedom-of-information accessibility away from the people in the province of Ontario when it came to Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One? I think it was the opposition that took it away from them. I'm not sure why. Maybe my friend from Durham, if he's doing a two-minuter, will be able to tell us why they did it. We had to bring it back and give it to them. Perhaps my friend over there will be able to tell us why.

Municipalities, when it comes to this particular legislation, are going to remain exempt. They are not subject to the provisions of this legislation, and the reason is quite clear: Municipalities have, beyond what flows to them from the province of Ontario, significant revenue streams that are non-provincial in nature. We feel that, given the residential property tax base—which I would say, in the context of most municipalities, represents their biggest revenue stream—it's not for us to be dictating to the municipalities in this particular piece of legislation how and what it is they should do with that money. When it comes to Bill 122, this particular piece of legislation, we are not going to tell municipalities what they may do with that money and how.

Having said that, I don't mind saying that in my community, my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I'd like to think and believe that the municipal councillors there, past and present, the mayors, past and present, people interested in any issue of relevance when it comes to the expenditure of provincial dollars don't feel that they necessarily would need to go out and hire a lobbyist to get access to the decision-makers in the government of Ontario.

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I would like to think they feel, and have had the experience, that since my election in 2003, I'm there; I'm their conduit. But, having said that—and I could say the same for my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North: They see us; they know we're there to work for them. They know we're there to fight for them and make their case to the province of Ontario. I'm sure that all the MPPs here feel that way when they work with their mayors, councils, reeves and wardens all across the province. For that reason, we left the municipalities exempt. We don't feel that they need to be part of this particular piece of legislation. As a result of that, they will remain exempt.

There's been some discussion. The member from—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Welland.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you. The member from Welland, who spoke earlier, talked about his perception of one of the holes in the legislation, that the legislation only deals with public tax dollars. Well, that's what the Auditor General's report dealt with. The legislation, Bill 122, is responding to the Auditor General's report.

We're saying we don't think it's okay for you to take public tax dollars. We don't understand why you would need to in the first place, as a hospital or a LHIN. Why do you need to take public tax dollars and hire a lobbyist? We're responding to the Auditor General. We don't think they should either.

He went on to say, "Well, they left a big loophole in the legislation. They are going to bring it in-house. They are going to find, through their other revenue streams"—and hospitals have other revenue streams. They get money through parking; they get money from televisions in the hospital rooms; they get money through private donations and foundations. Those funds are there. They're up to the discretion of the hospital boards, I would guess, to use as they see fit.

Perhaps from time to time they might find a circumstance—maybe they're working with an MPP who they don't think has access; I don't know. Maybe they're working with somebody—I don't need to mention any ridings. Maybe they feel there's a need that they could justifiably make their case, that they can't get forward, that they can't move their issue ahead. They want to use that money that's been donated privately by the people who are making donations. I guess that's going to be up to them. If there are others who feel differently, that's fine. But if I'm somebody who's contributing to a foundation, if I'm privately making my contribution to a hospital foundation, I think that I'd be a little bit reluctant to listen to somebody in a political party telling me how I thought it was okay for that money to be spent. I'm not sure we necessarily want to go that way.

We have moved the yardsticks significantly forward when it comes to issues related to transparency and accountability in the province of Ontario. People know that. We have reintroduced transparency and accountability in areas of provincial jurisdiction—OPG and Hydro One used to have it—that had that capacity removed by previous governments, by previous parties in the province of Ontario.

By any standard, we have moved the yardsticks significantly forward.

Should it be the will of Legislature, should Bill 122 pass over the course of the next few weeks, this legislation is going to build on work that was previously done by our government and will continue to enhance transparency and accountability for people in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to have the opportunity just to make a few comments with respect to Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector, which of course, for those people who are watching this debate, basically says that any organizations that are funded by the Ontario government can't use public funds to lobby the government. It sounds pretty straightforward.

I did listen to the comments that were made by the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, and his comment that the McGuinty government has been so open and transparent and so proactive about being so. But I think that's absolutely not the case. In fact, it's only been when this government has been dragged kicking and screaming by the auditor that they've really come forward and made any changes whatsoever.

It certainly is, in the case here, that this bill arose out of a very, very bad report by the Auditor General on the use of consultants and lobbyists in hospitals and LHINs, which comes on the heels of another report, just about the same time last year, on eHealth.

The present situation we refer to as eHealth 2.0, because it talks about lessons that this government really didn't learn from the eHealth report from last year, when over a billion dollars was essentially wasted on consultants rather than going into the building of a proper

electronic health system, which we absolutely need here in the province of Ontario. The Auditor General, for those who are making comments in the background here, even commented on this himself. When he was at his press conference introducing the most recent report, he said he was surprised that the government hadn't learned the lessons and it was still continuing to be a problem because he would have thought that these issues would have been addressed. They haven't, and they'll continue to be a problem.

This government just doesn't seem to get it. If they had, they would have agreed to Bill 39—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll be speaking in about half an hour and I'll have a few more things to say, but I was interested in a couple of the comments that the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan made. One was a reference to the generosity of the Liberal Party after the 2003 election, when New Democrats had been decimated. He makes the case that in order to have status, you needed 12 members, and it went to eight members. He might have forgotten that we had seven, so we had to win the eighth member in a by-election that allowed us to get to that generous eight.

Just a little glaring gap that you might have overlooked in terms of your generosity: You won a huge majority by appealing to strategic voters so that you could defeat the evil Tories. What you appealed to was the good sentiments of so many good New Democrats, when you told them, "We have to defeat the Tories because they're so bad, and in order to do that, we need you good New Democrats to vote for us"—and many did. You managed to get a good victory by getting so many New Democrats to vote for you. As a result, through the pressure of the Toronto Star, you managed to find a little generosity, in spite of the many months that you delayed to respond to the calls of many saying that we needed to be there as a legitimate third party because you might want to listen to the third party appeals. I just thought I would add that to the clarification of issues.

You made reference to the Tories perhaps wanting to centralize education and what those poor trustees would do. I just want to remind the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan that we in effect have a centralized system, something that you seem to be committed to, where the trustees are powerless and have very little to say. I thought I would remind you of that before I get to my speech in half an hour.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I think the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan articulated a position extremely well in terms of Bill 122.

In my case, I have three large public institutions in my riding: the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Trent University and Fleming College. I know they've never used any precious government dollars to hire lobbyists. They continue to meet me on a monthly basis so I can advocate on their behalf.

I find it passing strange: a little event that's taking place on Saturday, November 27, 2010, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Palais Royale. It says, "Please join us this year at the Palais Royale. For 86 years, this Toronto landmark on the lakeshore has provided a window into a bygone era of year of big music, style and elegance." I notice that the signature on this letter of invitation is from Sandra Clifford, the president of the Ontario New Democratic Party, asking people to buy tickets at \$1,000 a crack to enjoy lobster bisque—and I'm sure they will be having icewine at \$200 a bottle. I hope they buy it from Pillitteri Estates in the Niagara Peninsula. As John Ivison put it so well in his article in the National Post, "NDP Happy to Dance with 'High-Priced, Well-Connected Insiders.'" So I find that this is a very, very interesting position that has been put forward by the third party. Indeed, I will be eagerly awaiting speeches later this afternoon defending that kind of interesting invitation that's been sent out to all the lobby firms in the province of Ontario, so they can rub shoulders with the leader of the third party. I understand that Olivia and Jack will be there, in all their true elegance, to raise money—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

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Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan did pose a couple of questions and remarks, and rightfully so. He was talking about the freedom-of-information provisions. I think he's a very genuine member. Anyway, I think it's important that he maybe look at the history sometimes, because often the history is a good indicator of why things have changed.

I think what's important—when they restructured the old Ontario Hydro, the person who commissioned the fundamental report was Donald Macdonald. It's often referred to as the Macdonald commission report. He talked about the structure known then as Ontario Hydro. Of course, when they restructured it, they created Hydro One, which is the distribution network, and OPG, Ontario Power Generation. In fact, the other part was the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator. Some of those components did operate in the branches of the Ministry of Energy, but that's what happened.

The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan might know that when the restructuring occurred, some of the provisions and drafting were transitional, and there were a lot of very difficult decisions that were made in that restructuring. Sadly, the system design that was recommended by the design committee—our interim leader, Premier Eves, sort of backed away from it at the last moment, which was not probably the right thing to do.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Among other things.

Mr. John O'Toole: Among other things. He got nervous, if you will, and I think for the right reasons, too; the economy was softening. Anyway, that explains that part.

But under this particular bill—I'm going to speak next. In this bill, you'll find out that there's quite a bit of softening in it. In fact, it's so badly watered down it's

like cheap gruel, actually. Anyway, we will talk about that shortly here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Trinity–Spadina, Peterborough and Durham for their comments.

To the member from Durham, thank you for confirming, in fact, that it was your government that removed the FOI capacity—

Mr. John O'Toole: It was through restructuring.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, through restructuring or otherwise. Who brought in the restructuring to OPG and Hydro One? It was a mistake. The restructuring was a mistake, and the reason he had to go back on it is because, when you deregulated the market, you had to bring in a price cap. When it went from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, you capped it, because in a deregulated market, I think you were buying it at about 99 cents a kilowatt hour for a little while. We ended with about a billion dollars on a stranded debt overnight, pretty much.

To the member from Peterborough, thank you very much for his supportive comments.

To the member from Trinity–Spadina, he seems to be harbouring some criticism, I guess, about the way people voted in 2003. Second-guessing the will of the electorate—as they always say, the voters are never wrong. It was an interesting spin that he put on what occurred there.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I was speaking to your generosity.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Okay, well, I appreciated that as well. I don't necessarily want to use that language, but I would say that it was something that we did not have to do, and we did, and it was significant. It enabled you. It was helpful to you. I'm sure you would acknowledge that.

To the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who seemed in her two minutes to imply to the people following the debate that Bill 122 is a reaction, that this is the only thing we've done when it comes to transparency and accountability in the province of Ontario, as it is because of the Auditor General's report, I would say: Listen; of course not. In my 20 minutes, I listed lots of other things that we have done, and it's important to remind people that the Auditor General could only bring that report here because we gave him the power to do it. Before we gave him the authority to do it, he couldn't have brought the report here, and we did that some time ago. So to imply that this is johnny-come-lately stuff in response to the AG is nonsense. We gave him the ability to do this. You didn't and they didn't. We did it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I am anxious to shed some light on this bill. Here's a good reference—it's always good to start by looking at what was the genesis of the bill itself. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan just spoke

briefly here. He did recognize that the auditor's report was issued, I believe, on October 20. Oddly enough, that was the same date they issued the legislation. They knew that they were failing.

This thinly disguised bill was an admission by Premier McGuinty that they have failed miserably. If you look further back into the litany of tragedies that have occurred under their leadership, you'll find that the OLG—the auditor caught them there and issued a report. They tried to fix that, and it's still a miserable mess.

I could tell you that I've heard from people that the OLG in Belleville, I think it is, has a serious problem. It's not in the public yet, but I'm tipping the media; they should be listening here. If they look into the Belleville racetrack casino, I'm told—under good advice and protecting the people that would tell you these things—that this is another serious problem of mismanagement about to explode.

This bill is so artificial. I'm going to read the preamble, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence. Bill 122 has 10 parts to it; it's 21 pages and was drafted rather quickly. Here's the tough language. It's almost laughable. I don't blame the civil servants. They were probably directed by cabinet to not make this too onerous because of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, which they're probably opposed to.

The government services minister, Mr. Takhar, in the past has said that they're going to post all the expenses. Well, I've done a bit of research. None of them are posted. I think two out of 22 are posted. They say one thing, but the delivery is where the evidence is.

Sticking to the point here, I'm going to read the preamble. This is not a political statement. This is reading this bill here. It says, "Various organizations are prohibited from engaging lobbyists who are paid with public funds." Well, if you had a foundation raising funds, is that public funds? Those would be tax-receiptable funds, by the way, too. You've got to look at the skilful language here. It's sort of obfuscation, really, in a way; it's avoidance of the issue, okay? It continues, "and, in some cases, with revenues generated by the organization." It's a little bit ambiguous.

"Local health integration networks and hospitals are required to report on their use of consultants." They have to issue a financial statement every year. They're supposed to be audited, and it should show in there. What have they been doing for seven years? How come now they're starting to realize there's a fair amount of leakage from these organizations when, in fact, they're spending money that's not being spent on patients? That's what the public is concerned about here; patients are waiting for various therapies.

I'm dealing with one now. This young family is dealing with an eating disorder issue, and I'm told that there are absolutely no services east of Toronto for a person with an eating disorder which could be covered under mental health as an addictive treatment that's required. It's tragic. The service levels here are in the ditch.

What was the first thing this government did? It hiked this new tax called the health tax. Yet what I see is this: I

see almost every hospital begging, using lobbyists, to get their share of the money. Where's the money going? It's going to the LHINs. What are they doing? New furniture, consultants, trips.

Look, this is the truth of it all. The auditor must be appalled, and I'm sure he, out of respect, didn't tell the whole story; he just told what was essential.

Then we see that the bill is already drafted. He introduced it, and they try to blow it off the front page by managing the message, by issuing the bill. They bring out Bill 122—problem solved. I don't think so.

I'm going to get on to the specific wording here. This is the tough language of the bill. "The Management Board of Cabinet"—this is key work; this is legal—"may issue directives and guidelines concerning allowable expenses and procurement on the part of designated broader public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations." The issue here is "may." A real intent to resolve the issue would say "shall," not "may." It's like trying to catch a rabbit: By the time you catch it, it's already generated four other rabbits. This is what I call, "They really don't want to solve this problem." They're saying, "We fixed it." They haven't fixed it.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, no; they haven't fixed it. It has been going on—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Send a memo.

Mr. John O'Toole: The other minister is now speaking. She should know, because her ministry is in huge trouble. Every ministry over there is hemorrhaging debt. Children's aid is another example of an organization, and special needs at home. Those communities are all suffering.

You're wasting the money. It says it right in here, and you admit it. Now you've got a bill. It's not fixing the problem, though. Fix the problem by dealing with open accountability.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Here's the one on the LHINs. I'm being deflected here. This is right from the bill itself, this thinly disguised bowl of gruel: "Local health integration networks, hospitals, and other organizations, if so required"—that really strengthens the statement, "if so required"; who's going to say it's required?—"by the regulations, are required to report on their compliance with provisions." What it should say is, "shall report annually," period; no ambiguity about that whatsoever. That's what's missing.

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This is the integrity of the bill, the idea I support. But how they've drafted this is like a maze. Are they supposed to? It says "may" here, or "if so required."

Now, what I've really determined, after talking to several very reputable organizations—and they're not all to be painted by this government as bad. Here's the issue: If you have a one-time issue that needs to be resolved by a group of experts, like the university Professor Arthurs who issued the report on pensions, I think that's an

appropriate expense of government, to hire an expert to look and give you the right information at the right time with some right suggestions. Now, when it's over with, the government drafts laws which are then enforced by the pension organizations within the government. That's fine. Under fiscal, I guess it's called.

But here's the issue: That's good consulting, but when you're consulting about scarce dollars, that's lobbying. That's what this is about, using lobbyists to buy tickets to the leader's dinner, entertain members somehow at various functions; in fact, trying to get to the table—it's queue-jumping, in my view. There are organizations using public money, and that isn't acceptable, in my view.

I think the Minister of Health or whatever minister is under siege, and obviously health is going to get—it's growing exponentially with an aging population. They have no money now for long-term care. You know that yourself. They have a new strategy: aging at home. What that really means is aging alone because often their children and grandchildren are trying to look after them, and they're so busy, they're actually ignoring them. And they're not building one new long-term-care bed. So it's primarily the health care.

Now, the other one is the universities. What have we got in universities? We have the highest tuition in the country, and now they're lobbying to get what they need to get the job done and they're not having a fair process of access.

On top of that—I think this is the whole thing, at the bottom line—they are drowning in debt now, the province—drowning in it. They're raising electricity. They're raising the HST. They have all these problems after seven years; the people are completely exhausted by dragging this government around. You can't get to them unless you buy tickets to the dinners.

What's happening really is, the lobbyist part of this business: I think we all concur with the right of accountability. We agree with that provision totally. But now what's going to happen? They're going to be hiring the lobbyists full-time so they'll be in-house and they'll have the full pension plan, and maybe they only need them to do a study on long-term care or the extent of diabetes or other kinds of medically necessary procedures, about which you need a group to come in and talk to the minister and the members to educate them, and that's perfectly in order.

As I said today, here at the Legislature of Ontario there were three groups wanting our attention; one was Literacy Week, which is thematically working on gender in the media. Literacy was one of them. The other one was on chronic pain management, and there was lobbying on that here today. I think it's education more than lobbying. There was another one here as well on feeding the need. That's trying to understand how difficult it is in poverty in Ontario.

But that is the real essence here. This bill simply doesn't get it done. It was drafted cynically to take the story the auditor issued off the front page and say, "We've got the problem solved." It isn't solved, and it's

so cynical to let the people of Ontario go away or listen to this debate this afternoon from the government members reading the crafted speeches they were given by the same consultants and trying to make us believe they've solved this problem. In fact, they're going down the hill rather quickly here. The people of Ontario are on to it, and they're not going to put up with it anymore. I don't say that everything they're doing is bad, but most things are; not everything, though. They are still salvageable, to some extent.

Today what's really important is to stay tuned, watch carefully and don't let them blow it by you without a lot of questions being asked. I see the Minister of Finance quite regularly referring as far back as Sir John A. Macdonald when he wants to blame somebody for something. Even today, earlier in the questions, they were blaming other governments. In fact, there was a debate; they were blaming the federal government for things.

You've had the steering wheel for a number of years, and now we're starting to bounce off telephone poles. You've got to learn how to drive the message and stay tuned and stay disciplined to try to achieve what's right for the people of Ontario.

In a troubled economy—it's not all your fault; I understand that—first of all, you have to recognize you have a problem. Before you can recover, you have to admit, "I have a problem." That seven-step plan or whatever it is that's needed to be taken is the first step, and I think this bill doesn't do that. This bill here, as I've seen it, is paving the way for hiring more consultants inside the various ministries to do some media management and some messaging. That's what I see.

The cynical part, as I said, to repeat myself again, is that the auditor's report was filed on the 20th. They already had the bill. They filed the bill on the same day—if that doesn't tell you something. They just want this story to go away. They really do.

If there was more accountability built into it—one of the best media plans managed under the Ministry of Health, I think, in fairness, was when they pulled the funding out of the promotional allowances for the pharmacists. The pharmacists were lined up 10 deep, mad as heck about this issue, and somehow the message has sort of gone away a bit on that, on managing the thing on the pharmacists.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, the Minister of Health is here now and she has been hoodwinked too, I think.

Here's the issue: What I'm hearing from a former member of the OPA, who lives in my riding—I have respect for him. Right now, what's happened is, the Shoppers part has sort of gone away; they're sort of onside. They've left the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. They got their way somehow, and the independents are now going to survive—the real issue here is that pharmacy services in rural Ontario will be lost.

Another thing is where they use crafty lobbyists, and some of those lobbyists certainly got to the minister—probably through the dinners they had.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: All I'm saying is that there are very reputable groups. I think of Navigators, one of the top, over the 15 years that I have been sitting and trying to listen to reasonable arguments—but then somebody mentioned here that the group Courtyard is notorious as being loaded with Liberal-friendly members. And when you get that kind of mixed, caustic, acidic environment around you, it's going to corrupt it somehow and contaminate it.

I don't directly blame the minister. This is the key thing. I actually directly blame the Premier. He's in charge. He's the one signing the cheques at the end of the day. It's out of control right across the board.

WSIB has a problem. Name one organization that doesn't. OLG has a problem. Health care has a problem. The children's aid society has a problem. Name one: The 407, the new-build nuclear, energy—the whole thing is going down the hill rather quickly. I hope it can last for another year or so. They may have to call a quick election.

The other part of this whole debate today though is that the use of lobbyists here has become rather skilful and rather stealthy over the last several years. They're insiders who are both on the political side, as well as the lobbyist side, and they seem to have the ear. They messed up on the eco tax. They screwed that up. They didn't release that properly. The eco tax, I think John Gerretsen was given a time bomb to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would you mention by ministry, please?

Mr. John O'Toole: He was the Minister of the Environment at the time, the member from Kingston and the Islands. Is he still in cabinet? Yes, he is; pardon me.

I think they handed him a bad policy. It was poorly thought out, poorly implemented. In fact, it was just plain wrong. Then they implemented it at the same time as the HST. How cynical is that? They thought there would be such a blow-up about the HST that no one would recognize the eco tax.

1700

Even there, the cynical part of this whole thing is, when they're withdrawing the eco tax, it should have said until after the next election, because they still have a revenue problem, big time. They've got \$20 billion in the ditch. They're \$20 billion in the hole—\$20 billion. That's 20% of the budget that they don't have. They're short 20% of their spending. They have a serious spending problem. So this year there's more spending, wasteful spending. In fact, the auditor's report suggests—most of it here is very specific. It prohibits organizations from "engaging lobbyists who are paid with public funds." I support that goal.

I think our leader, Tim Hudak, is very hard on making sure of accountability right through, and I think that's what the people of Ontario want. They want more accountability and they want firm, honest leadership—firm and fair leadership. That's really what I see coming. I saw that, actually, in the municipal election. People are fed up with these people who promise one thing and do

another, and that kind of summarizes what we've had. They promised to close the coal plants. How many have they closed? None. What have they bought? Seventy-one-cent energy from solar panels covered with snow or ice or something.

Look, I can't say everything they've done is bad, but I would say they have kind of lost their way. Without being personal in any way, they've sort of lost the energy or the desire, and they're just sort of struggling to the goal line. It's hard to see if they'll make it there.

But, no, in fairness, the economy is not all their fault. It's a good part of it, but not all their fault. But they've raised taxes, they've increased spending, and you have to ask yourself, is it any better? Is it any better at the gas station? Is it any better in your home? Is it any better in our schools? They're raising \$30,000 in one of our local schools—unbelievable—and there's a target set for every class of how much they have to raise. It's a new tax. It's not the eco tax; it's a school tax. They've got kids collecting it now. When I look around, I'm troubled, but I know they've tried and they have just run out of energy and ideas. Really, it's that simple. I mean, it's not personal. It's just a case that they've worked hard, the economy has gone south on them, and it's like a business: They are going to have to close the door, really. It sounds to me like they're already preparing the exit plan, an exit strategy of some sort. But in fairness, it's not all their fault. Some of it is Stephen Harper's fault; probably some of it is Jean Chrétien's fault. But they try to blame Stephen Harper for everything. That's the problem.

Interjection: John A. Macdonald.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You can't blame Robert Stanfield or Sir John A. Macdonald; all that has passed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: What have you done to fix the problems in the last seven years? That's the question that people should be asking. How are you doing? I asked the families of Ontario in my riding of Durham, "How are you doing? Have you got a job? Is your electricity bill manageable, your gas for the car, your home? Registering your kids in hockey: Was that more expensive this year?" "Yes. Everything you're doing in Ontario now is more expensive." Why? Ask Dalton McGuinty.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to energetically respond to the member opposite because this legislation, I would suggest, is an example of how we are continuing to put in place the framework that people in Ontario need. As has already been said, we gave the Auditor General the authority to go in and shine a light on our hospitals to look at what was happening with lobbyists and consultants. Because we gave him that authority, we are now able to introduce this legislation to fix something that has been in place for many years.

But I also want to respond to something the opposition has talked about repeatedly, and that is the eHealth

situation. I want to address the issue of this initiative, because there is so much that has been done, and yet time and again eHealth is characterized as having been a waste of money.

Let me just talk about electronic medical records. In 2005-06, some 770,000 Ontarians had access to EMRs, as they're called. Now almost 4,000 physicians representing over 4.6 million Ontarians are using systems funded through the province's EMR adoption programs. That is a huge, huge increase. By March 2012, we expect that 10 million Ontarians will have access to EMRs. More than one million children have an electronic health record.

If we look at telemedicine, 102,000 remote medical consultations took place in telemedicine in 2009-10, 90% or 48,000 more than in 2008-09.

The exponential increase in the ability of people in remote communities to get services they have never had access to before, including people on the James Bay coast, is what the eHealth dollars bought. Far from being a waste of money, they have been an investment in better health care for people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a couple of minutes here to talk about the message that the member just gave to this House. If anybody listened to it over there, you would be appalled at the things that you've done.

You talk about accountability. I can still remember on television, that nice-looking fellow saying, "I will not raise your taxes." I hate to go back to that, but it's there; it's going to haunt you forever. That's accountability. When a person, when the leader of your party, gets on television and does an ad like that and says, "I will not raise your taxes"—and what's he done? We've got so many tax raises over here.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Now the member across the way would like to speak, and she's had her chance to speak. Maybe she'd like another two minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Let's give her unanimous consent for another two minutes.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: If that's what she wants to do.

You've got nothing but taxes being raised. That's all they've done over there. You want to talk about accountability, guys? Well, there's not much left in this government that we have right now.

They really don't care about rural Ontario. They bankrupted us. Then they turn around and raise taxes again.

I hate to see what the next one's going to be because I don't think they're done yet. They still have a year to survive, if they can survive.

What did we have, a \$20-billion deficit last time? The biggest deficit ever, that's pretty bad. You start talking about accountability. There isn't any accountability left over there. It's really unfortunate.

The member just brought that all out. I hope they listened, and maybe there's a chance for them to change, but I don't see much change coming for the next year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was able to listen to my Conservative colleague's speech, at least some of it. While I don't agree with him on some of the things he said, one of the areas that he touches on that I think all of us need to be aware of is the fact that in communities where people can't get a long-term-care bed for their mother or their father or their grandfather, where people are told they might be able to get an appointment with a family doctor four months from now, where people are being told that health services are being cut in their community, people are astounded to then learn that health care agencies like hospitals are spending in excess of \$100,000 a year on paid lobbyists, consultants.

Who, by and large, are these people? They're people who claim to have inside access to the government. Some of them are former staffers in the Premier's office. Some of them are former staffers in cabinet ministers' offices. I think the average person across Ontario would be astounded to hear this.

I think they would be equally astounded to know that it has been going on for seven years under this government, even as this government has announced and re-announced and re-announced legislation saying that this is not going to happen, or this is not allowed, or this is improper. I think that's what people find really, really astounding.

Frankly, there is no defence for it. There is no excuse for it. There's absolutely no excuse, for example, for the emergency room in a community to be cut at the same time \$100,000 is being spent on hiring paid lobbyists to lobby the cabinet minister.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

1710

Mr. Phil McNeely: I just want to read some lines from the Office of the Auditor General's October 2010 report:

"More specifically, with respect to the ministry:

"Internal audit reported that for consulting services acquired during the 2008-09 fiscal year, many elements of the directive were being complied with, but there were still deficiencies that needed to be addressed.

"Our work indicated that the ministry was, for the most part, in compliance with the requirements of the revised directive that came into effect in July 2009."

We go back, and I think the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan said it very well. It was this government that shone the light into many of the agencies that were working as part of the broader public sector, and this has been reinforced as we move along. It takes some time for all of these different elements to be brought forward so that they are efficient and strong. I think that's what we're finding out, that the hospitals were generally doing a reasonable job, but they weren't following the rules properly.

The LHINs, which were formed three or four years ago, are doing an excellent job and are representing us in

our ridings, making decisions locally that used to be made in Toronto. The LHINs are doing well, but to have the expertise, especially when you get into IT work—I was really impressed with the work we're doing with IT.

IT Source is going to give the ministries, the hospitals, the LHINs and the universities that extra expertise that we need. IT Source did not exist a year ago. I was at the public accounts committee, and it came up. We have now the expertise on IT projects to make sure that they're properly set up in the beginning, that they're properly sourced—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the Minister of Transportation as well as the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for their very supportive comments, the member for Kenora—Rainy River, of course, on long-term care, and the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

The key, really, here is that one issue was consistent across all the comments: Basically, it's the failure in the health care plan. Half the budget, basically, is in collapse. That's what this bill is about. It's trying to solve one of the holes in the Titanic here, which is the lobbyist part of it, and I think almost all members would agree with that. There had to be some action taken, regardless of the ideology that occurs here from time to time.

The Minister of Transportation is a very intelligent woman. Here's what I would say. She talked about eHealth. Actually, there are systems today that are running. Look at the Canada Health Infoway and the children's health network, which is also an electronic record for children already running. What's taken them seven years, and it's still not running for all the people all the time?

The telemedicine program was started by, I believe, Elizabeth Witmer when she was the Minister of Health. Look into the records. I know they haven't been here that long. Canada Health Infoway is a federal program to build infrastructure for the delivery of electronic health. It's a federally funded system. Why don't you jump on board with other provinces?

They seem to think they're the only ones with good ideas, and it turns out they don't have a lot of good ideas left.

I think using consultants in this province in an appropriate time and place for educating the public is a good idea. In fact, there can be experts brought in to help you solve problems. But this idea of using them to get to speak to the minister directly, jumping the queue, if you will, of other hospitals—set up a system where the access to funding is there, and set the rules for how you get it. This idea of paying your way to favour is what the people of Ontario are firmly against.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 122. I want to start by talking about the deficit that the Liberals find themselves in. It's

a \$20-billion deficit. It's huge, much bigger than the one that Mr. Harris left in a good economy and much bigger than the one Bob Rae left in 1995—much, much bigger.

The Minister of Transportation says, "Yeah, but we have a recession." I understand. We were there in 1990. I don't remember one generous Liberal saying, "Ah. But it's a recession." Not one. But today, it's a recession. Yesterday, the NDP was in power. I just love it. Collective memory has a way of lapsing from time to time. "The only thing that matters is that we are in power now, and there is a recession." A \$20-billion deficit is big. It's inconceivable to most. If we had hit a debt wall in 1995, poor wall in 2010. How is that wall bearing up? But it's okay; it's a recession. The Liberals say so. "Let's move on" might be the argument.

What happens when you have huge deficits? What happens when money doesn't flow as it normally does? What happens when certain parties that will remain nameless give away so much in corporate tax giveaways? It just means that the poor citizens have less than they did before.

What happens when some governments that will remain nameless give away income tax cuts because they deem them to be a good thing? A \$20-billion deficit; \$5.2 billion less for corporate taxes; \$1.2 billion less in income tax cuts that we so happily give away—and we have a \$20-billion deficit.

What happens in that kind of culture, member from Peterborough? We breed a culture for consultants. Why do we do that? Because there's need. When there is a need, people look for experts who can try to help them out. They go to the lobbyists, the consultants, because they might have a way in with governments. Of course, you're not affected by them, I know, because you're good Liberals and you transcend politics and influence. But when people are finding themselves in dire straits, they go to the people who have the knowledge and the connection to perhaps influence a Premier or a minister to deliver some crumbs their way. You've got to know it, Liberals, because in every sector imaginable, there are financial problems. Whether it's the Ministry of Health or education or social services, the needs are great. The money isn't flowing.

You remember, member from Peterborough, four years ago when I used to tease you about your words, "This is historic." You guys don't say that anymore. But in the first couple of years, everything you did, however trivial, became an historical accomplishment by Liberals. But neither you nor any other Liberal member uses that word anymore. Nothing is historical anymore. It's hysterical but not historical.

People are worried. People are struggling to make ends meet. I have a feeling some of you know it, and those of you who are holding on for dear political life know it. The others, who are flippant, who are about to leave office in one year, are just clueless. You're not listening to the messages from your constituents who are telling you how much they are hurting—and they are. People are losing good-paying jobs. People are not

earning as much as they used to. People earn less today than they did in 1980. It seems to you unthinkable or unimaginable or intellectually not correct, but economists say they're earning less today than they were in the 1980s.

Immigrants used to do well in the 1970s and were able to buy homes. Today, they can't buy homes. Today they're rushing out of Toronto and going anywhere they can to be able to afford a home, because they can't afford one in Toronto anymore. It used to be a place of immigrants, but not anymore. It's now the well-to-do folks who come into my riding and most of Toronto, because it's only they who can afford it.

People for Education just put out a report saying that schools are fundraising more than ever, fundraising until they drop. Why? They're using that money for essentials such as computers, something that you would think should come from the Minister of Education. It's coming out of the People for Education, member from Peterborough. It's an objective organization, one that I know you like. They're saying that they'd rather do different things. They'd rather talk about how to help that poor child who's not getting the special education attention, how to create a stronger community, how to build a stronger community together, but they're too busy—not just baking cakes, as they did in the 1960s, but raising big bucks to pay for essential things in schools.

1720

The United Way is raising \$115 million, \$120 million now. It used to be \$40 million. Every year, they ante it up because they need to raise more and more because they're getting less and less from governments. Little schools, charities, churches, synagogues and everywhere else are trying to appeal to the goodwill of people to raise more money because governments are not doing their fair share anymore. Why, with a \$20-billion deficit, what can you do, I suppose?

So we have created a culture of consultants and lobbyists. They're virtually the same thing, although "lobbyists" is a little more negative. "Consultants" is a little more positive in terms of the connotation attached to them, but they're essentially the same. But you understand, you are driving them to hire consultants. There are 4,500 non-profit organizations, many of which hire consultants. Why? They're strapped. They're strapped for cash. They can't do what you want them to do. For the last 15 years, they haven't been able to hire full-time people. They hire, if they can, only part-time people. Why do they hire consultants, you ask, when they have so little money? It's because they have little money, and it's because governments give them less and less every year. That's why they're doing it. That's the culture that you have created.

I know some of you are listening and some of you are not. I know that those of you who are not listening are not listening because you understand that you've got to pretend you're not hearing it. Hopefully, I can give you something to say in the two minutes you've got that you can latch on to so that you don't have to talk about any of the meaningful things that I am talking about. But those

of you who are listening intently understand the problem: that you have created a culture of need, a culture of finding people in the know, because they hopefully, desperately are looking to people who can give them the tools to raise a few more dollars. What a sad, sad story. What a fine, fine mess the Liberals have created for us.

The Auditor General does a report the same day the Liberals introduce a bill. "Oh, but we've known for a long time. Oh, but we were the ones who asked the auditor to do this report. We've got nothing to hide." The very same day, they've got a bill ready to present, to suggest, "We don't need to be told by the auditor. We already know. We're moving ahead of him." It's beautiful. It is beautiful to watch. Then, as my friend the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan was saying, "But we're only doing what the Auditor General is suggesting we do. Why would we do anything different or any more?" So when we attack him and his government for not closing any loopholes, he simply says, "Well, we're only doing what we were told to do," that is, that no one who earns 10 million bucks or gets 10 million bucks from the government can use those public dollars to hire consultants. Case closed. No more consultants; they're gone.

"Is there something else you could have done?"

"Well, no. The Auditor General didn't say we should do anything else."

"Oh, so the job is done?"

"Yes, the job is done. We did what the auditor said we would do. Now we've got transparency, accountability. We're done. We appeased and pleased the Auditor General. The job is done.

"Ah. You say, New Democrats, that you can use dollars that are not coming from government to be able to hire lobbyists? Okay. That might be true, but that's not the issue before us, because the Auditor General didn't say anything about that."

"Oh, I see. Okay. Well, then, we don't have to worry about it. If the Auditor General didn't say it, we don't have to worry about it. I see."

Your bill says, on page 3, as they define lobbyists, that it means "an individual who acts as a consultant lobbyist within the meaning of section 4 of the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, and does not include an in-house lobbyist within the meaning of section 5 or 6 of that act...."

"That's okay. It's not a big deal. If these MUSH sector entities have inside lobbyists, that's not a big deal. It's not a problem. We, in fact, say so in the bill. We exempt them. They can do what they like. That's okay. It's the other lobbyists, whoever the others are; those are the ones we're controlling, because those are the ones identified by the auditor, and we've got that under control."

"Oh, I see. So the job is done?"

"Yes."

"Okay, then."

I don't know. I think it's our job as opposition parties to say that institutions that are driven to lobby you feel the need that they have to do that. We, as New Demo-

crats, through our leader, Andrea Horwath, have asked you many, many questions, saying, "But how could underfunded universities use lobbyists, with public money or without public money?" Because if they use tuition fees to do the same, how could they be using money that is desperately needed by students to keep tuition fees down, as one example, or reduce class size, as another, or deal with a maintenance problem, as another? How and why would they use money that they do not have, that could be better used, for the purposes of paying good people who might be connected to you? But in the context of a \$20-billion deficit, you're not going to get anything out of it. Those universities and hospitals ought to know that in this kind of environment, you ain't gonna get too much more out of this stone that has no ability to bleed any longer.

So we say to hospitals and universities, stop spending money on lobbyists. There's no money to be gotten. You have been underfunded for many, many years, and you're going to continue to be underfunded for many years. The lobbying has got to be of a different kind, where citizens who feel and understand the problems that we are faced with engage you in a public debate and finally engage you next year, October 6, with a final vote as a way of determining whether they like you or do not like you. That's the power of the citizen, and that's the power of the vote. We don't need lobbyists. We don't. We really don't. We need citizens to be engaged and to ultimately tell you, or tell governments, whether they like you or not. I think that they will pass judgment on you on October 6, 2011, because your record so far is not that great, and 76% of the people in a poll responded that they would like to see another party in power. Yikes.

And you, member from Peterborough, can say, "Oh, the member of the third party has fundraisers and they invite the lobbyists and consultants." You can do that all you want. I just love to hear it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We'll remind you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's not going to help you.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's not going to help you. But I'm not sure, because, you see, what people know is that the ones who are under influence, if any—it's not Marchese; it's Jeff from Peterborough. But more than Jeff from Peterborough, it's the ministers. They are the ones who have the public purse to determine whether or not monies could be given or not given. So when they go to Marchese, God bless. I'll take their money, honest to God. I want to invite—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Name them. Send me those names too. I'm going to ask the leader to send me those names, because I wouldn't mind raising a couple of bucks from them.

Interjection.

1730

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Jeff, I could see you like you were a fly in—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I ask the member just to mention the riding name.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Peterborough is like a fly in that little you-know-what, right? It's good to see you that way. I wish you the best of luck; I do.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I wish you luck too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Because you've got one more year.

Freedom of information: Finally, hospitals will be included in the FOI legislation, something New Democrats have tried to push for quite a long time. You wouldn't pay us any heed in the past, but finally you do.

Mr. Jeff Leal: So you agree with that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: If we agreed with it in the past, why would we disagree in the present? It makes no sense.

Member from Peterborough, here's a little question I ask you. It will take 15 months before that part is enacted. By the way, conveniently, it's after the election. Is there a reason for that? All of a sudden, FOI is okay. You finally listened to the NDP. That's fine. We agree with you. No problemo. Why does it take 15 long months? Our election is but one year away. This measure, FOI, is a year and six months from now. Why?

Here's the why: You guys are worried. I understand you're worried; I do. And there's political quivering going on, right? Do you understand that, political quivering? You should, and you've got to protect yourself, defend yourself as best as you can.

This bill goes a little way toward addressing some of the issues that we have raised and some of the issues that the Auditor General raised. That's the Liberal way. You only go as far as you can or as you need to, just a little, tiny little bit, just to be able to say, "Yes, but we listened to the auditor. He told us what to do, and we did."

But God wouldn't want you to go too far. Oh, no. Because that would not be the Liberal way. We've got to hold God back on that one. You've got to wait, Lord, on that one.

So is it a bill that we can support? What are you going to do? Of course, I'm going to support this in the end. I just wanted you to know that there are some little problemos in the bill, and I wanted to point them out, just to inform you, if nothing else.

I'm looking forward to your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to rise and make a couple of comments in response to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who spent a little bit of his time speaking about and implying that the reason that people were hiring lobbyists with hospital public money to come down to Queen's Park and lobby down here is because they were starved for cash. In 2003, the provincial health care budget was \$30 billion. Today it's \$45 billion, an increase of \$15 billion, a 50% increase.

Now, I suppose the contradiction or the criticism will be that you're not spending it well, but to imply that they're starved for cash when we've increased the budgets in the health care sector and in hospitals I think

by 40%, within the hospital sector, by \$40 billion there—it's a bit rich to suggest that they've been starved for cash.

It also implies that this has never happened before. He's also telling people following the debate on television that previous to this legislation people were not hiring lobbyists to come down here. They were hiring lobbyists when they were in government. They were hiring lobbyists when they were in government. They've been hiring lobbyists since we've been in government. We're stopping it now. You can say we're doing this as a result of the AG's report or not; it doesn't matter. We're stopping it. You didn't.

He talked about FOI. We're responding on the hospital sector. We're making the hospital sector subject to FOI, again because we're responding to whatever the AG had to say. The NDP have been asking for it for a long time. That's what he said: "We've been pushing for the FOI." You had five years: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995—five years. They didn't do it. I don't know; there's a reason, I suppose.

On the consultants piece as well: \$650 million under the previous government down to \$350 million; we reduced the use of public expenditure on consultants by 50%—down by 50%.

So there's a little bit that we disagree with. That's not a surprise, I suppose. Nevertheless, I thought it important to make those points.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Trinity-Spadina is always informative and entertaining. I say that quite genuinely.

Now, I do take one small version here. He spoke rather critically of the member from Peterborough. I don't know whether it's justified or not, but I can just say that I was reading an article that the Peterborough Regional Health Centre submitted their budget to a meeting under the Central East Local Health Integration Network on October 27. Here's the interesting part: The deficit at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre is \$8.9 million. The decision made by the McGuinty-appointed LHIN is—now their deficit is \$17.8 million. That's the Peterborough hospital which went from \$8 million to \$17 million.

It goes on to say that the LHIN forced them to lay off staff, and now they're spending about \$9 million in severance to nurses that could have gone for children with heart conditions or neurology conditions. They'll stand in the House—the member from Peterborough won't stand for them—and blame the hospital. That's what they'll do, or they'll blame the minister federally. Stand and deal with the issues. They're starting to come down around your ears.

The member from Peterborough didn't cause it, but he's not standing up for them, and neither are any of the Liberals standing up for their constituents, on energy or any issue. They're smiling and they're looking as if everything's going fine. Well, it's not, and this is one more example.

The use of lobbyists has gotten out of control. That's just one more thing. It's like a number of boards to build a house. Well, your house is coming down around your ears. Do you understand? Don't you get the message? Are you not reporting in the House what letters you're getting on energy bills from seniors or from a person who's on a ventilator who's now going to have to turn the ventilator off at night? It's—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today in support of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

Some of us here in the House would like us to send a little memo to these organizations that says, "No, don't do that again." But on this side of the House, we prefer to be more firm about it, so we've decided to propose a bill, Bill 122, that will prevent this from happening, not a little memo. We don't think a little memo will do.

The members from the NDP party—we don't know where they stand. Sometimes they say, "Yes, we're going to support it." They speak against it, but they say that they're going to support it.

I'm very proud to support it because I think that the Minister of Health has it right. The money that is sent to hospitals should be for health care. As all of you know, I'm a former nurse. In the hospitals, we need all the dollars for health care to make sure that our patients are well taken care of and that the doctors, the nurses and the health professionals have all the equipment they should have to make sure that our patients are well treated.

I support the Minister of Health. She's bringing good discipline. If, out there, they didn't know that they shouldn't use the hard-earned money of the taxpayers to pay for lobbyists, now they know; it's very clear. They have a piece of legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I listened intently to the speech from the member from Trinity-Spadina, and he had some good comments. This bill will make its way to committee. There will be public hearings, an opportunity for the public at large to come and make their viewpoint.

I was interested in hearing my friend from Durham. A wise man once observed that you should never let the facts get in the way of a good story, so he actually told a very good story. When it comes to PRHC in Peterborough, in terms of operating funding in the last six years, we've been in the top six in the province of Ontario. There are 159 hospitals in the province of Ontario. In terms of operating funding increases, we're in the top six, but he forgot to mention that factual part of the story.

He also forgot to tell everybody here that PRHC has had a \$24-million sick leave deficit, one of the highest in the province of Ontario, and indeed, that is a management problem. That is not an operational funding problem; that is a management problem.

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If we're going to banter back and forth here in the Legislature, it's important that we put all the facts on the table. Severance settlements were part of the HIP plan, the hospital improvement plan, approved by the Central East LHIN. All the facts are on the table. The member from Durham referenced the story but he forgot to give the back half of the story that provided all the facts related to the hospital improvement plan.

This is a bill, a very important piece of legislation. We all recognize that lobbying has been going on in hospitals, community colleges, universities, for at least 30 years in the province of Ontario. This is the opportunity to stop this practice.

The member from Trinity-Spadina will agree with me—it will go to committee. There will be, I suspect, significant representations during the committee stage, and it's all in our own best interests, I believe, to get a good bill that respects taxpayers' dollars—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Trinity-Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It is good that after seven long, painful years the Liberals finally introduced a bill that addresses the problem of lobbyists—

Mr. Howard Hampton: After they got caught.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Why else would they respond? Because that's the only thing that Liberals do. They respond when there is pressure.

Mr. Howard Hampton: After they got caught.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But they like to say, "No, no. We talked to the auditor. We knew there were problems and we told him to go look. That's why we did it." You do it because you're under tremendous political pressure. Questions were asked by our leader, Andrea Horwath, on a regular basis, and every time those questions came, you could see the ministers cowering, trying to skulk under the carpet. The problem is, you can't hide here; you can't hide here in the Legislature.

The problem is that whenever the economic times are bad, lobbyists will thrive, and they will continue to thrive. You've done nothing to eliminate them, and you've done actually very little to reduce their numbers, because when the economy is bad and they're starving for cash, contrary to what my friend from Thunder Bay-Atikokan was saying, when our health care is strapped for cash and our social services and education systems are strapped for cash, people are hungry to find a way to raise money. Lobbyists are here to stay.

We've got inside lobbyists—no problemo; you don't touch that. They're going to continue to thrive and do well and be well-paid, and they're going to be there for a long, long time. They're going to ride out this government and the recession, and there will be better days for them to make more and more money. This bill does a little bit to satisfy your desire to say, "We listened to the Auditor General." But there are so many loopholes. What are you going to do?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'd like to join the debate for the few minutes that we have available. I'd like to add to the debate. I have enjoyed, as usual, the presentation on Bill 122 from our colleague on the other side from Trinity-Spadina.

The reason we are debating this bill is because it was this government that brought it to our attention, and we introduced this legislation. It was this government that introduced this legislation so we could debate it. I hear that it's good. I hear that the members are going to support it. It would be nice if every piece of legislation that is introduced in this House by all sides would welcome approval the same day. It would be very nice. But we have a process, and the process is that we come into the House and we debate it. I know how the House works. I used to be on that side as well. I used to practically say the very same things that I hear from some of the members on the other side.

When we deal in the public interest, I think we have to do the best that we can, regardless of where we're sitting. And if we truthfully believe that the time has come, as someone has been saying for the last seven, eight months—I believe he has been elected as mayor. I really don't remember his name, but he has been saying that the gravy train must stop. That's a nice cliché.

The reason why we are debating this particular law is because the person that we empowered to make a report said, "No, there are some problems. Government of the day, it's your responsibility to do something about it." So the government has introduced Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, and it does what the Auditor General said that we should be doing.

We didn't waste any time. It is the responsibility of the government to act when we see some problems or when some problems have been brought to our attention. It would be wonderful if everything the government did would be perfect, but the fact is that now we are dealing with this particular bill to rectify some of the problems, to look after the interests of the citizens, and we are acting.

So let's move the process along. Let's move it to committee, and let's see what else our own members who belong on the committee and the public will have to say about it.

The fact is that the government is taking action. The member says, "Why are you bringing it now?" If no one is aware of a problem that is existing, nothing would be done. Let's be honest about it. If no one brings it to our attention or to any member's attention, and then we get questions from the House—unless that happens, nothing happens. When that happens, it happens for a reason, and action is required. Action must be taken to correct it for the best interests of the people.

It doesn't happen just to us, today, as the Liberal government or the McGuinty government. It happened when I was in this House under the Conservative government and, I remember, under the NDP government. My goodness. We used to scream "murder" once.

There is a 17-storey building that went up in my area a few years ago when the New Democratic Party was in

power. We said, "How can you afford to buy a four-acre site for \$7 million when the market is commanding about \$200,000 an acre?" I wonder why. We brought it to the attention of the then government, the then minister, but you know what? The consultants, they were so many and so powerful and so well infiltrated that no matter what we said from that side of the House, the deal was made. No one was listening to the people, to the community.

Now we are acting on concerns that we have, that the opposition has and that the public has. It is incumbent upon every member of this House to say, "How soon can we do it, and if we do it, what happens?" If we move along and we approve—and I hope that this will move ahead, and one day we are going to approve it, sooner than later, let's say—what will this Bill 122 accomplish? It accomplishes a lot of the things that the opposition, especially the member from Trinity-Spadina, has been saying.

We have to stop it. We have to clean up lobbyists. We have some 259 Ontario classified agencies, like the big ones: the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario, the hydro entities, hospitals, school boards.

I have to tell you that my own hospital—and I don't fault the boards of the hospitals, the CEOs, because they are doing what they are allowed to do. Would they go and hire a consultant if, five years ago, there had been a law saying that you can't hire? I had a call from a consultant myself. I'm quite open about it, because it is something that is allowed at the present time. It was something that was allowed yesterday.

1750

I'm telling the hospital board and saying, "Why in the name of the good Lord did you go and hire a consultant when you have an elected member you should be using as your consultant?" They don't have to pay anything. But they do it. Why do they do it? Well, they all do it. Less expensive, more expensive: They all do it. They are friends; they are acquaintances. It is the custom.

The fact is that this government, like no other government, even at this particular time, has been engaged in controlling, if you will, the damages that we have received because of the economic situation. The government said, "We have to keep our people working."

If we look at the auto sector, which is, I would say, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, sources of employment that we have in Ontario, what would it mean for Canada as a whole, for Ontario as a whole, if we didn't take action and support the hundreds of thousands of employees who would have been out of work? We continue to create jobs on a daily basis with the actions of this government here—hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Are we concerned about the \$17 billion or \$18 billion or \$20 billion? Of course. But it's no different than anybody who is concerned with raising a family. They don't know if there is a part-time job available or if they're going to be getting a full-time job. They have to worry about how they're going to move along.

Our job today, as a government, is to keep Ontario working. As long as the people of Ontario have jobs, they

can afford to buy cars; they can afford to buy all kinds of equipment, furniture; they can take holidays; they can do all kinds of things. Plus, the government has a responsibility to build new schools, new hospitals. We are doing that. This is part of why, when things get tough, the government has to get tougher, and it has to keep on going because it has a responsibility.

I think we found complete acceptance within the House and out of the House when we said we have to look after our own kids, providing all-day kindergarten and stuff like that. That costs money: a billion dollars. But look what it does to millions of families throughout our province. It gives an opportunity to the kids to go to kindergarten all day long, and the freedom to those parents to operate in a much better, efficient way, to go to work and manage their social life. I think it's because of the actions of this government.

It's easy to hear the opposition say, "Well, you have a problem." It's not that we have a problem and we are not acting on it. And it's not that the problem was brought upon ourselves by ourselves. You have to look around. It's the economic situation. We have ups and downs. But the important thing is to look at our government, that it's able to face those difficulties when we have those ups and downs.

Things will get better, and the deficit will come down and the budget will be improved. But in the meantime, we have to keep our kids in schools, good schools. We have to provide good health care. Look at our seniors, for example. We have to provide for our seniors. What do we have to say about our seniors? I can't think of a time when seniors received more benefits from any other government than this particular government here. Are they being affected by some of the cost increases in utilities? Of course, they are being affected. But at the same time, the government recognizes that we need to do something for our seniors. Therefore, we are going to compensate them so they don't feel the pinch so much.

For our workers, I think we have increased the minimum wage seven or eight times since we've been in power. If you talk to some of the other provinces, they say, "Wow, you're doing good." We have to balance the people who provide the jobs and our workers because we have a responsibility to both. While the employers provide those jobs, we have to make sure that the jobs they provide are fair and just to the people who work for them.

I think my colleague wants a couple of minutes. I think I have used my time.

It's an important piece of legislation, and I think we have to look at it very realistically. I know it's difficult, because if the opposition doesn't try to look for the worst parts in a particular law, they feel that they are not doing their job. But I think the people who they represent are quite well educated, and I know that they will understand when they see us members saying—they may not be in government, but they are reasoning it out, and that's the way it should be. They should be supporting it, because this must end. This is the right way of doing it. I hope

that at the end, all the members of the House will be supporting Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I always appreciate the important contributions that the member from York West makes to this assembly. Before he arrived here in 1995, he had a very long and distinguished career serving on Metro council. He's certainly a man of vast experience. His family came to this country and was able to prosper. It allowed the member from York West to serve in public life, and he does so very effectively.

In his comments today, he talked about helping seniors and working with his hospital in terms of Bill 122, making representations on behalf of his community. I believe they are getting a new hospital that will be under construction shortly. That's certainly significant in terms of his strong advocacy on behalf of his constituents in the wonderful riding of York West. He is an example of why we need to bring in this legislation. There is no need for lobbyists to make representations on behalf of their communities. They can go to individuals like the hard-working member from York West—and it's true of all 107 members in this House, who work very diligently, effectively and with great effort each and every day to represent their constituents on a variety of issues, be it in government, in opposition or being a member of the third party, doing what is expected of them by their residents.

The member from York West covered a lot of the activities that he's been involved with and provided some significant comment on Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I want to bring this debate back to Bill 122. Of course, this was introduced on October 20. The other interesting thing that happened on October 20 was the Auditor General's report. It was not a shining report if you were in government, shall we say. It was very clear that once again, the auditor had come forward with an excellent report with many concerns. Of course, most of those concerns we are trying to pretend don't exist or will all go away under the introduction of Bill 122.

1800

I would not want to mislead the people who are reading Hansard and the people who are viewing this debate that the genesis for Bill 122 is very clearly the damning report that the auditor came forward with, talking about just how much use and abuse there has been with consultants by both hospitals and LHINs. Keep in mind that only three LHINs across the entire province were reviewed, and they all had issues.

Bill 122 is strictly trying to divert the discussion and the debate around what the auditor has already previously highlighted a year ago with eHealth and again on October 20 with Consultant Use in Selected Health Care Organizations. I would not want us to lose track of exactly what we are to be debating here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened with interest to the member from York West, and his speech leads me to ask a couple of questions. One would have thought, with the disclosure of the billion dollars squandered on eHealth and the fact that the Auditor General said that virtually nothing was produced, and then the pronouncements from the Premier that this was not going to happen again and this was not going to be allowed to happen again—one, I think, is surprised to find that this has been going on more than a year later and continues to go on. I think people would want to ask the member for York West, “Were those just empty words that the Premier pronounced over a year ago, that this is not going to be allowed and this is not going to happen anymore?”

The other thing I think people would want to ask is, why was this legislation produced only after the government got caught? As we all know, what the Auditor General does is he does his work, and then he goes to the government and says, “This is what I found. What’s your response going to be?” It was only after this government got caught that it brought out this legislation.

But the third question I think somebody would want to ask—the government is now saying, “Oh, this is urgent that we address this.” If the government feels it is urgent to address this, why is it that the bill really doesn’t take effect until January 2012, after the next election? If it was really urgent on the government’s part to deal with this, shouldn’t it be taking effect now, as soon as the legislation is debated and presumably passed? Why is it going to take until after the next election, January 2012—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It’s my pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. The fact of the matter is that over 13 years of NDP and Conservative rule, consultants offered services to various government agencies. It was this government and this Premier that allowed, basically, the Auditor General to review government agencies. The

Auditor General came up with recommendations, and based on the recommendations of the Auditor General, we came up with this accountability act.

This accountability act has several elements to it. One of those elements is the prohibition of the use of consultants by various government agencies, departments and so on and so forth. In Ontario, there are 259 classified agencies, such as hydro, utilities, hospitals, universities, cancer care and various other categories. The use of services of consultants in these agencies, the ones that are getting more than \$10 million in government funding, is prohibited based on this legislation, this bill.

Also, this bill provides some provisions for the CEOs and executives of these agencies to post their expenses on their websites. There are various elements in this legislation for accountability of the broader public service.

These are the things which this government and this minister have brought to this Legislature which we didn’t have in the past 13 years when the Conservatives and the NDP were ruling this province. We are so proud that our government and this minister have brought this legislation into the House, and hopefully it will pass—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from York West has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mario Sergio: I want to thank all the members. It’s past 6 o’clock. I think it’s time to go.

I hear loud and clear the message that comes from the other side. Let me say that we are as anxious as they are to see this bill move ahead. If you will, let’s stop the gravy train here as well. Let’s bring this bill to the attention of the general public to bring some comments, and hopefully we can address it more fully when the bill comes back to the House.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being past 6 o’clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 in the morning.

The House adjourned at 1806.

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des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 2 November 2010****Mardi 2 novembre 2010**Speaker
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 1, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I am pleased to participate in this debate on Bill 122, entitled An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

The question that we really need to ask is, what prompted the government to bring this bill forward? Well, it wasn't an initiative of the government; it was really an initiative of the Auditor General of the province of Ontario. The auditor, as we know, released a special report in October. The report is entitled Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations. What is interesting is the timing of this legislation. It's very clear to all of us in this House that this legislation before us today is strictly a forced admission of guilt on the part of the government: that it has failed in leadership and that it has failed the many organizations throughout this province charged with the responsibility of delivering public services.

The auditor's report itself was in response to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I want to commend the members of that committee for appealing to the Auditor General to look into the conduct of this government and the various organizations charged with responsibility in the health care sector. That was the focus of the auditor's report.

It's interesting that this special report was preceded by the Auditor General's October 2009 special report on

Ontario's eHealth records. We all know what the result of that report was. It was a condemnation of this government and particularly the Ministry of Health, those individuals who were responsible for allowing literally more than a billion dollars of public funds to flow through the hands of consultants and lobbyists for the purpose of supposedly establishing an eHealth records system for the province of Ontario. But in the end, there is very little to show for it, to the point where we're really now at ground zero in terms of attempting to develop an eHealth records system. No one denies the importance of having an effective eHealth records system to make our health care system more efficient, but it was the mismanagement and the outright abuse of public dollars that was condemned by the Auditor General in his 2009 report. So he took the next step.

What is it that the Auditor General found in this most recent report? I'd like to just point out some of the highlights. The auditor points out that "insufficient time was allowed for consultants to respond to tender requests, and we noted instances where the underlying documentation indicated that a competitive process had been followed but we believed that the process favoured a particular consultant."

He goes on to say, specifically with respect to LHINs, the local health integration networks: "Procurements examined to mid-2009 indicated that processes and practices used by the LHINs we visited were inadequate to ensure that the use of consultants was planned for, acquired, and managed in accordance with the requirements of the directive then in effect...."

"As many as two thirds of the consulting contracts we examined had follow-on agreements, and most were awarded without a separate competitive process or documented justification for the additional work. At the three LHINs we visited, we noted that consultants' invoices did not provide sufficient information on work done or other billing details, including receipts for expenses, to support the amount paid."

These are fundamental principles of business, and for the auditor to uncover this kind of mismanagement and lack of accountability is truly a condemnation of how business is being done in this province.

With regard to hospitals, again I quote from the auditor's report: "Eight of the 16 hospitals we visited had engaged consultants to lobby the provincial government, and in some cases the federal government, using funding provided by the ministry for clinical and administrative activities."

I suppose what is more offensive than anything else is that funds that were intended for clinical purposes were in fact used to pay consultants to lobby government for more money. He goes on to say: "While the more than \$1.6 million spent by the eight hospitals was relatively small in comparison to these hospitals' overall funding, we questioned the appropriateness of using government funds to pay lobbyists to help obtain more government funding."

0910

We couldn't agree more with the Auditor General. Whether it is \$1 million, whether it's \$500,000 or \$1 billion, the reality is that there are people in our communities throughout this province who are on desperate waiting lists for procedures that can't be afforded, supposedly. Monies are not flowing from the ministry to the LHINs to the CCACs, and yet there's this abuse of public funds for the purpose of simply paying lobbyists and consultants.

The government's response to all of this is this bill: predictably, not a solution but really more diversion from the real underlying issue, and that is, namely, a failure of this government to manage the affairs of this province and the resulting waste of public funds. That is the real issue: erosion of public services and, ultimately, an undermining of public confidence, not only in this government but in its various institutions and organizations charged with the responsibility of delivering public services.

So we now have two reports that call into question the competence of this government. We have seven years of evidence against which to assess the leadership of this administration, and when we get beyond the public announcements, when we get beyond the numerous announcements by various ministers throughout the 31 ministries of this government, we know one thing, and that is that this government has done one thing extremely well: making pronouncements, making announcements about dollars that are being spent, whether it's in health care or education or infrastructure. But at the end of the day, there is an underlying problem that is undermining the credibility of this government and its ability to manage the affairs of this province.

These auditor reports shed light on only a very narrow aspect of the government's mismanagement. As I indicated, there are 31 ministries in this government, and the evidence is overwhelming that there is a lack of leadership and direction at all levels of this government.

I believe that this government has reached the tipping point. As I speak to people, whether it's in the business community, whether it's in the health care community or the social service sector, whether it's in agriculture, whether it's in the forestry or the tourism industry, whether it is in the development or building industry, to the person, people are saying that they have had enough of this government and its mismanagement. There are pretences and pronouncements, but there is no competence in terms of actually delivering on those commitments. In fact, it's now to the point where precious public

dollars are being seen to be wasted and where our public services are being undermined, where seniors are now in a position where they are being overtaxed for the very essentials of life, whether that's their electricity bills, their natural gas bills, their ability to put gasoline in their cars, or their ability to just simply make ends meet. Whether it's students who have serious questions about whether, in fact, they're going to find a job when they graduate, or young families whose dream of actually owning a home one day is being eroded—affordable housing is not only a dream for people who are trying to make ends meet at the very basic level of subsistence, but affordable housing is out of the question.

Why? Simply, if you look at how this government conducts its business in terms of adding layers and layers of regulatory tape, the burden of time that's imposed on the entire development process and approvals process in this province makes it impossible for any housing to be delivered at an affordable rate. My point—and I don't want to get diverted from this bill—is simply that the incompetence of this government and its inability to provide leadership is evident in every one of the 31 ministries of this government, and the consequences are real. It's that lack of leadership that has allowed the abuse of public funds.

My question: Rather than the ministry or cabinet introducing another piece of legislation, why do we not see the Premier of this province holding accountable the ministers and the deputy ministers of those ministries under whose watch all of this abuse has taken place? But that, you see, is not the objective of the government. It's not to get at the heart of the lack of accountability; it's really to provide yet one more diversion from the real issue, and that is a lack of accountability and a lack of transparency in terms of how this government does its business.

I find it interesting, as I read through this bill—I took the time to go through this bill and highlight all of the references that are made in this document to reports. What I find amazing is that the answer to accountability for this government is to now lay the burden of yet more red tape and paperwork on all of those organizations that should be spending their time delivering essential public services on the front line. Line after line after line in this bill reads: "Every local health integration network shall prepare reports." The next paragraph: "The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care may issue directives to local health integration networks respecting the reports ...

"the information that shall be included in the reports ...

"to whom the reports shall be submitted ...

"the form, manner and timing of the reports"—reports, reports, reports, and on and on and on. What we have here is a piece of legislation that is the answer provided by this government supposedly for more accountability in the public sector. And then we wonder why we are unable to get the services on the front lines when we have a government that's intent on simply creating more bureaucracy, more red tape and basically hamstringing the very

people who are charged with the responsibility of delivering front-line services.

The creation of the local health integration networks themselves was really the first major step on the part of this government to create the lack of accountability and to hide transparency. Why do I say that? Because we know that what is essentially happening now is that the local health integration network, with all of its bureaucrats, with all of the multi-millions of dollars that have gone into creating those offices and buying the furniture and hiring the employees—and, by the way, siphoning key front-line health care workers back into the bureaucracy of the LHINs by suggesting to them that their services are much more important to the local health integration network in providing them with consulting services, rather than allowing them to spend that additional time actually delivering health care services.

0920

That local health integration network was created specifically for the purpose of creating a barrier between the Ministry of Health and the community. Why do I say that? I was present at a meeting with the Central LHIN administration—the president, the CEO—and there were members of the Liberal caucus. I was there. In fact, Speaker, you were there in your capacity as MPP from York region. The single largest complaint that we had for the LHIN, at that point in time during that meeting, was that we, as MPPs, were unable to get a response from the Ministry of Health when we began to advocate for needs within our local community. We were being told as MPPs, “That is no longer the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Go and talk to the LHIN.” When we approached the LHIN, the LHIN of course says, “Well, that is not within our purview. It’s a funding issue. We don’t have enough funding; that’s the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.”

When we challenged the community care access centre as to why they weren’t delivering the important front-line services that are clearly necessary, the community care access centre would tell us, “The LHIN is not providing us with the resources to provide these services.”

When we, as members of provincial Parliament, challenge the LHIN, the LHIN simply states, “We don’t have the resources because the Ministry of Health is not providing them for us.”

What has happened? This government has intentionally created a structure within the province of Ontario that does anything but provide for transparency, does anything but provide for accountability, and has done everything systematically over the course of the last seven years to in fact put a distance between the decision-makers in this province—the Premier, the ministers, the deputy ministers—and the front line.

This bill before us today will do nothing to improve accountability. We will not have accountability in this province until such time as the Premier of this province accepts responsibility and demands accountability from his ministers, and until his ministers demand account-

ability from their deputy ministers for what is happening down the line in their ministry and in the various organizations throughout this province that are charged and entrusted with the responsibility to deliver public services.

This bill today is an insult and a diversion from the lack of accountability of a government that has failed the people of Ontario. I believe, as I said earlier today, that the people of Ontario have seen enough, that they have reached the tipping point, and they’re now saying to the government, “We will not accept any more of your pronouncements or your promises. From this point on, we want to see results.” It’s a sad day when the government can actually stand and pretend that a document such as this is to be accepted as an effort on the part of the government to provide accountability.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Newmarket–Aurora, and he delivered what I consider to be an excellent speech here in the House today. He spoke about ministerial responsibility, and that is something that has been sadly lacking in the past several years in this House—ministers actually standing up and taking responsibility for their departments and responsibility for the laws that affect them and for the bureaucrats who work for them.

In fact, what the member from Newmarket–Aurora had to say in terms of the LHINs was exactly right. The local health integration networks were set up—in my belief, and I concur with him—in order that the minister would then be able to shed that responsibility or any kind of semblance of having the responsibility. It’s not just the minister who is here today; it is the three past ministers of this government who were here and did much the same thing.

As a result, we have here a bill that does virtually nothing, a bill that is full of flaws. And really the answer is, as the member from Newmarket–Aurora says, for the Premier and the ministers to take responsibility. The answer is for them to look at their departments, to look at the laws that affect those departments, to look at the hiring of consultants and to say that the buck stops here, because it isn’t just enough to come in with a watered-down bill and expect that great changes are going to take place. Those changes will only take place when a government stands firm on its ground and says that they’re mad as hell and they’re not going to take it anymore. That’s what is going to be required here.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora is absolutely right in his analysis. I commend him for what he had to say today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I’m pleased to rise—once again, actually—to make some comments on the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. I believe that this bill, if passed, is really quite broad. For example, there would be a ban on lobbyists in the proposed legislation, and it

would prohibit certain broader public sector organizations from using public funds to hire lobbyists. That includes Ontario's 259 classified agencies. Examples of that could be and are the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and Cancer Care Ontario, hydro entities and large broader public service entities like the hospitals, our school boards, CCACs and universities. Very large organizations throughout Ontario are, in many cases, named in this bill.

Procurement is something that people have been wondering about here in the Legislature, and the government would have the authority to make procurement directives that large broader public sector entities would have to follow. That, once again, includes hospitals and school boards etc.

Expense claims have often been the brunt of questions in this Legislature, so the government would have the authority to make expense claim directives to require rules to be set and followed by the same named broader public sector entities; once again, hospitals and school boards, for example.

There will be increased oversight, something that the opposition is requesting, and rightfully so. The proposed legislation would authorize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to implement new accountability measures for hospitals and LHINs which would require the public posting of expense claims, something that I think everyone would think is proper at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few comments on the address from the member from Newmarket-Aurora, and I want to, I guess, echo what the member for Beaches-East York said. The member for Newmarket-Aurora made a wonderful speech, and I think he touched on a number of very effective points regarding Bill 122 and what isn't in the bill.

I want to go back to his comments about the LHINs, because certainly I've had a lot of discussions about the local health integration networks since my election earlier this year. I asked a question in the House last week about accountability of the LHINs, and it's been an amazing response since that question. It speaks to some of the points that the member for Newmarket-Aurora talked about.

These organizations have caused tremendous grief in my riding and in some neighbouring ridings. In fact, the point that I brought to the House last week was that a group has even given money back to the LHINs: \$52,000. It was Hospice North Hastings. They sent me an email after I brought it up in the House and they thanked me for bringing forward this point.

People have posted on blogs, on newspaper sites, talking about the political cover that these LHINs have provided. And when the member for Newmarket-Aurora talks about ministerial responsibility, he's absolutely right when it comes to these LHINs. They're providing a tremendous amount of administration to extremely small

organizations to justify their own existence. That's not accountability.

0930

We need the ministers across and the government across to not just throw up a fancy name in a bill but actually mean something when they put legislation forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on some of the remarks made by my good friend and colleague from Newmarket-Aurora. On this day, I cannot agree with him.

I can't agree with him on any part of it, particularly on his comments relating to the local health integration networks. He suggests that it would be better to recreate a Toronto-centric bureaucracy, which was taken apart because that very bloated Conservative bureaucracy wanted every single decision in health care to be made out of the minister's office or by the minister's staff.

I can't agree with him on moving decision-making on health out of our community, particularly in an area like our Mississauga-Halton LHIN, where we have been a picture of success in that regard. We have been able to respond more quickly, whether it be getting urgently needed equipment and hardware in our hospitals, whether it be such things as linear accelerators or whether it be the moving of funds in order to save jobs as our hospitals balance the budget. This structure, in our area, in the 905 belt—which is where that member comes from—works, and it has been effective.

However, this bill deals with lobbying. Let me say this: In seven years representing people in the western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, not once has our hospital ever hired a lobbyist to come and see me. Not once has our community care access centre ever hired a lobbyist to come in and see me. Not once has our local health integration network ever hired a lobbyist to come in and see me, or our children's treatment centre or our city.

The Mississauga-Halton LHIN works. It's an example of best practices that need to be perpetuated, that need to be propagated across the other LHIN structures, not destroyed in an ideological rant predicated by the rambblings of Sarah Palin and the United States's Tea Party.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the members from Beaches-East York, Chatham-Kent-Essex, Leeds-Grenville and Mississauga-Streetsville for their comments.

In closing, I just want to say this: My colleagues on the Liberal side could not be more wrong. They don't get it. I do believe the people of Ontario do, and I believe they'll be held accountable.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure for me to rise here. I looked at the bill and studied it, and it was obvious why

the bill was in front of this House. The bill was in front of this House because horrendous things have been happening in Ontario because there was no oversight by the minister and no oversight by the ministry into the hiring of consultants. It took the auditor's report to detail exactly what was going on in Ontario.

Just a couple of egregious examples from his report: The one that is cited most often and certainly the one that the Liberal government needs to hear is that a \$275,000-a-year hospital consultant claimed \$97,000 in fees for other consultants and \$50,000 in administrative support services fees, neither of which was in his contract. The consultant billed the hospital twice for over \$7,000 relating to a salary bonus, foreign exchange fees and a Christmas luncheon. The consultant then expensed the accommodation costs of \$400 per night for three nights in Chicago, along with \$500 in hotel phone charges, accommodations of \$510 per night on a second four-night trip to Chicago, accommodations of \$700 per night for five nights in Singapore and dinners in the greater Toronto area, one costing \$300 for three people, including \$140 for alcohol, and another costing \$350 for three people, including \$215 for alcohol.

That's the first egregious example. This is something that the minister's office, the ministry, did not catch, was not aware of, did not look at. This was a huge expense of public dollars, because after all, the ministry and the Ontario government are the chief funders for hospitals and, in turn, for consultants.

This was just wanton waste of taxpayers' money. Is it any wonder that taxpayers are angry at what is going on in this ministry when they see hospital emergency rooms being shut down in Fort Erie and Port Colborne? Is it any wonder that they're upset and angry when there continue to be waiting lists in some hospitals for emergency procedures? Is it any wonder that people sit in the emergency room waiting to be seen, and sometimes, if they're not in a hugely serious condition and are triaged, they have to wait two and three and four hours? Then they turn around and they don't blame the staff. They don't blame the nurses and the doctors and the hospital administrators, because very often they love their local hospitals and the people who work in them. But they do blame the waste of money on this ministry.

So the minister comes forward with a bill that's supposed to do something. But I want to relate a couple of other things that the auditor uncovered. Here's another good one: One sole-sourced consultant CEO earned a per diem rate of \$1,100 for eight hours' work. "The consultant billed for 250 days worked each year, meaning that every weekday was billed for the last three years, excluding statutory holidays.... In May 2008, he received approval from the hospital for a one-week trip to Hong Kong to attend a business-related conference as an invited guest speaker. However, he added a personal one-week trip to Japan as part of the excursion. We noted that the hospital paid the consultant's airfare claim of \$7,800, which included the airfare for his personal trip to Japan, and also paid his fees billed for every work day during

the month, which included the two-week trip to both Hong Kong and Japan."

Or another one: One hospital sole-sourced a consultant for "\$398 per hour—\$2.6 million in total—and no fixed ceiling price or specific project deliverables were established."

Or how about: "A hospital single-sourced a contract of over \$170,000 to a consulting firm to provide Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims management services from June 2007 to May 2009. There was no documentation supporting the single-sourcing of the contract, and at the time of our audit the hospital could not locate a signed copy of the contract. We noted that the consulting firm continued to provide services to the hospital after the contract expired. As a result, total payments to date have amounted to \$235,000, or \$65,000 over the original contract price of \$170,000, without any supporting documentation or proper contract renewals."

The auditor uncovered horror stories like this in every one of the 19 hospitals and LHINs that were investigated. Efforts in this House to expand what the auditor was able to uncover, to look at the remaining hospitals and LHINs—because all of them potentially may have the same problems—were rebuffed at every stage by the minister, by the Premier and by the members opposite.

It is not surprising that people see the rot in this system. They don't see a ministry standing up for them or a government standing up for them. What they see is this bill. And what is in this bill? They are looking—ordinary people, ordinary constituents, ordinary citizens—to see their taxpayers' money used wisely. They do not begrudge money spent on hospitals or on medicare or on health. They do not begrudge that money at all. When I speak to my constituents, they are very proud of their hospital, Toronto East General. They are very proud of the services that are delivered there, the number of babies who continue to be born there and the entire effort that the men and women who work in that institution make to be a good part of our community and good citizens. They want more money to be spent there. They want excellent services. They want them when they need them. I have never heard anyone, not in my office, ever come and tell me that they want less money being spent on health, but they do come to my office and speak about waste. They come and talk about money not being spent where it should be spent and that really having a negative impact on the people of our community.

0940

It is speaking of the public dollars that I ask the government opposite to look and turn your attention to. If this was a private institution, if this was something that people paid for privately, I'm sure there wouldn't be the same kind of uproar because, although private companies can and do spend their monies in ways that they see fit, they are only responsible, generally, in the end, to a board of directors and to an annual meeting of the shareholders. This is not the same thing. This is public dollars.

The government needs to get that through their head: Public dollars have been squandered and have been

squandered hugely in this province over the last seven years. They have been squandered by various ministers who have not taken control or rein over how the money is spent. They have allowed for a culture of entitlement. They have allowed for people to take advantage of the system knowing that there were no safeguards in place and that there was no time or effort made by ministry staff and by the minister, or various ministers, to look into what was needed.

It was my party, I'm proud to say, that revealed the cost of the insider lobbyists. We asked for the review of the auditor, and it was passed in committee.

That audit showed people across this province really what was wrong. It was a small audit. It was not an overarching audit. It did not look at every LHIN; it did not look at every hospital. It simply picked a few out. The auditor is a busy person, I would imagine, and was under some considerable time pressure, discovering what he and his staff discovered, to try to find out everything that they could. But it doesn't mean that this is all there was. There was certainly a lot more going on than this. There was certainly a lot of monies being wasted, and people see that. People see that, and they complain about that. They don't like it.

If you happen to live in Fort Erie or Port Colborne, especially, and you see the emergency departments shut down, and you see people dying—we've already had one or two deaths—being transferred to a hospital that is 10 or 15 minutes away, then you can understand the angst and the anger that they have when they read a report like this.

They want to know, what is the government doing? Well, the government has come forward with a minor bill that contains a few provisions that we can support.

But I'll tell you, it doesn't answer the whole problem. In this province, we need the Ombudsman to have control and to look at the expenditures taking place at the LHINs, the hospitals and long-term-care facilities. We are the only province—I think the only province—that hasn't given that authority to the Ombudsman.

It was my privilege last night, along with some other MPPs that I saw present, to go over to Bay Street to the Ombudsman's office. There was a celebration to mark 35 years since the Ombudsman's office was established by the Davis government. Six Ombudsmen have held the position, each with continuing and growing authority to stand up for the people of this province. One can only be proud of what the Ombudsman's office has been able to do over the last number of years, and one can only be proud of the current Ombudsman and of his staff for what they have uncovered in a great many fields. Their last report, or one of their last reports, was *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. It talked about people having to give up their children to the care of children's aid.

This is the kind of person, the kind of group, we need to look at our public institutions, to have some oversight. But this government has rebuffed all efforts to have the Ombudsman do what the Ombudsman and only the Ombudsman can do best. We think that if the govern-

ment was serious about rooting out the rot, that would be one of the first places they would go. If they were serious about rooting out the rot, they would have let the auditor continue the investigation into the remaining hospitals and the remaining LHINs that hired these sole-sourced contracts and these consultants—and continue to do so to this very day.

Now the government has been caught, and ever so reluctantly, ever so reluctantly, they are granting freedom of information for hospitals. But in the body of the bill it's very clear: They're not willing to do it right away so that people can find out what's happening. This will not even become the law in Ontario for freedom of information for 15 months. Lest anyone wonder about the time frame, anybody watching on television, 11 months pretty much to today is an election day. This government does not want to be embarrassed by freedom of information about hospitals, about consultants and about anything else in the time leading up to the election. The law is going to come into effect for the new government, whoever that might be, four months after the next election. It will be four months before people are going to be able to find out anything and either praise this government, which is highly doubtful, or condemn them, which is the likely outcome. This bill holds all of that off for 15 months.

Mr. Paul Miller: Timing is everything.

Mr. Michael Prue: My colleague behind me from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek says, “Timing is everything.” I think it is not coincidental at all. It is the reality of what this government is attempting through this legislation: to pretend they are doing something, but in reality hiding their very sad and sorry record. And even when that happens, even when the public gets to find out, the retroactivity clause will only allow the public to go back as far as 2007. It will not allow them to go back any further. It will only allow them to go back to the second mandate of the McGuinty government and not necessarily to the first. We remember that first mandate as well: the hospital waste, the ineptitude of various ministers, the eHealth scandal and everything else that happened.

One of the really sad and sorry and egregious things that happened in the body of this bill is that long-term care has been excluded. I'm very concerned about what's happening with consultants and monies in hospitals and LHINs, but we need to be ever-vigilant and perhaps even more concerned with what is happening in our long-term-care facilities. We all know or have loved ones—parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, relatives, friends, former neighbours—who live in long-term-care facilities, and we know, those of us who have visited them, that the workers in those facilities try their utmost to befriend, to work with, to help those who are in their senior years who are unable to care for themselves. I take no umbrage against any of the workers. I take no umbrage against anyone who works in those facilities and who tries their best. But I do wonder why this government wants to hide

from the public the freedom of information to find out what is happening in the facilities.

One need only open up a newspaper—and the Toronto Star has done a great deal on this recently—to see the sorry state of nursing homes, long-term-care facilities, homes for the aged and everything else. People sitting there in urine-soaked diapers, people sitting there who haven't been toileted, people eating crummy food, people living a life that we would not wish upon them—and a life where we can do so much better.

0950

Why does this government want to stop freedom-of-information requests on long-term-care facilities? Why are they excluded? Why is nobody talking about this on the government side? Of all the places that should be looked at, these surely are ones, because the people who live in those facilities often don't have relatives or family that care for them. The only people who speak out on their behalf are the workers who work for and with them. They are the only friends, often, that they have.

They, too, are constrained and they, too, are fearful of speaking out on occasion, because they know if they speak out and if they tell people—if they tell politicians or the media or anyone else about the sorry state—they're likely to find themselves unemployed. That, too, is the sad reality of what is out there.

If you really want to make sure that something is transparent, then it should be the transparency of our long-term-care facilities. I say that to the government. If this does end up in committee—I'm not sure if it will, but if it does go to committee—then I think one of the amendments that has to be made is to include long-term-care facilities, because these places where people live are going to continue to expand. The population of Ontario and the demographics are such that many, including many in this room, may find themselves, if they're fortunate enough to live long enough, in one of those places. We need to make sure that those individuals who have worked so hard for this province, who have contributed so much to the life of the people of Ontario, are protected in a way that they are not now protected and will not be protected if this bill is passed as it is.

I ask the members opposite: Cast yourselves in one of those places. Think about who is being affected. Wonder if they are spending money frivolously on consultants and high-priced junkets and everything else, money that could and should be used for better food, better medication, better support, better toileting and better surroundings for our old and infirm. That's the question that needs to be asked and that's the question the government needs to act on. I ask all of you on the government side, if you think this is a good bill, go to committee and make it better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I appreciate the comments from the member from Beaches–East York. I can understand that the opposition has a role to play, and sometimes they play their role better than other times. It's easy to walk

into the House, especially if you are in the opposition benches, and rant and rave, if you will. It is part of their job to criticize and it is fair to criticize the government when the government is wrong.

I do hope, as he said at the end of his debate, that indeed the bill will move on to a committee level where he, other members, members of the public and stakeholders can indeed come and make presentations and present suggestions that are really worthwhile to care about and improve the bill.

No bill is ever presented as foolproof, but let me say one particular thing. This is right at the beginning of the report itself. It's not the opposition's words, it's not our words; it comes from the auditor himself, who states: "I am pleased to transmit my Special Report on Consultant Use in Selected Health Organizations, which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts requested pursuant to section 17 of the Auditor General Act."

It wasn't the opposition, it was not the government, but the committee did request it and the government acted. It is here because of that. If it wasn't because of the committee's recommendations, we wouldn't be dealing with the report here today. And if it wasn't because of their request and the action of the Auditor General and the actions of the government to bring Bill 122, we wouldn't be debating this in the House. I hope that this will continue and make the bill better.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm certainly glad the member from York West spoke instead of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, but I'm here to respond to the member from Beaches–East York. I have the greatest respect, having known him for quite a few years, and his comments summarized the universal feeling within Ontario: the cynical nature of how this happened.

Here's what happened. Madam Speaker, you probably know as well that the auditor was doing due diligence on the job and they knew—in fact, through the Premier's office, they manage when this thing gets launched. When they knew it was coming—and they knew. The member from Newmarket–Aurora said it most succinctly this morning: They knew it was coming and they knew it was a bombshell. So what they did is, they drafted, hastily, a bill—poorly drafted, I might add—and they tried to take it off the front page by saying, cynically, "We've responded to the report. We've solved the problem, and it's all over."

When I hear the member from Beaches–East York, who has found out, as the member from Newmarket–Aurora has as well—it's just another example for the people of Ontario to keep their eye on how they're trying to avoid responsibility. Usually they blame Sir John A. Macdonald or somebody for what's happened in the past, but this time they've been caught by the auditor; just like the eHealth scandal, they've been caught red-handed.

This bill, Bill 122, that we're debating this morning, if you look carefully at the language, it even grows the position of cynicism in the people of Ontario. If they

wanted to solve the problem—here's one section. It says, "The Management Board of Cabinet may issue directives and guidelines...." What's this "may" all about? It should say clearly: "They shall," and specify a date to file a report. But, no, they are allowing—and there are other sections that are just as neutralized. This is a disappointment.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to commend my colleague from Beaches–East York for his well-thought-out submission.

I'd also like to bring forward to the public out there: Why did this happen? Why did this bill come forward? This bill came forward because there were complaints. This bill came forward because there was all kinds of money going out the door to consultants and other people that shouldn't have been going out the door with public funds, and also lobbying with public funds and lobbying the government for their own money.

I hear the members over there stand up and take claim for this bill and how wonderful they are that they brought it out. The only reason they brought it out is because they got caught. I'll tell you right now, this bill should have been out 25 years ago, and a lot stiffer than it is. I think there should be forensic audits of all ministries. I think that every board, every part of this government that has daily hands-on efforts should be audited every year. The public should know exactly where the dollars are going, and then let them be the judge of who is doing a good job and who isn't. But that hasn't been the case. Hundreds of millions of dollars go out of this place every year and people out there don't have any idea where it's going.

I'll tell you, just on the eHealth scandal itself, over 60% of the money on eHealth was spent on consultants in five years—66%. They got \$100 million out of \$388 million worth of hardware and software out of that program. If you multiply that times the 21 other major ministries, plus the other 200-and-something agencies and commissions that this government controls, it would be mind-boggling how much money goes out there. I could do a lot with that money.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to just read from the auditor's report:

"More specifically, with respect to the ministry:

"Internal audit reported that for consulting services acquired during the 2008-09 fiscal year, many elements of the directive were being complied with, but there were still deficiencies that needed to be addressed.

"Our work indicated that the ministry was, for the most part, in compliance with the requirements of the revised directive that came into effect in July 2009...."

This, of course, came up in public accounts. That's where the resolution to enable the auditor to go in and look at hospitals and LHINs came from. Of course, we brought in legislation in 2004 that enabled the auditor to

do this type of investigation in the broader public sector. So we have been working to bring that openness here.

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One of the major problems, I think, with bringing in consultants has to do with—a lot of those consultant contracts are now in information technology, and a lot of them have follow-through. A consultant gets in and then the contracts get extended because there's a real learning process to change it. But compared to previous governments, this government has aggressively and successfully reduced its use of consultants. The government has reduced the use of consultants from \$656 million in 2001-02 to \$304 million in 2009-10. During our tenure, we've halved the use of consultants, and that's very important.

We've also brought in something that's important: IT Source. That came out of the public accounts committee to some extent. IT Source now has 160 full-time equivalents within government that know about information technology and can help our government make better decisions and hire consultants in a more open, transparent way. And we'll—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from York West, Durham, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Ottawa–Orléans for their comments.

To the member from York West, he is correct: The committee did vote for this. No one is denying that the committee voted for this. But it was upon the motion of the member from Nickel Belt. As I understand from the member from Nickel Belt, it was a motion that was hotly debated and did not appear likely to pass until some considerable pressure was brought to bear. I am proud of what she had to do, what she said and how she got that through committee, and I thank the Liberal members who supported it in the end.

To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, he is correct in pointing out that the reason that people are angry about what is happening in the hospitals and the LHINs around the consultants—the high-priced flights, the trips to Singapore and Hong Kong and Japan and the lavish meals and alcohol—is that this is money being spent on public funds. That is why we have an obligation to go and look at this, because they are taxpayers' dollars. Taxpayers do not begrudge money spent on health care facilities, doctors, nurses, home care workers, but they do begrudge money given to consultants for high-living lifestyles with very little to show for it at the end.

To my friend from Ottawa–Orléans, he talked about the reduction in the monies given to consultants. We all welcome that reduction. But could we not aim for zero? Could we not say that we have a bureaucracy that is second to none in the world? To be proud that \$304 million is being spent, and we know much of it is being spent as detailed in the auditor's report, is not something for which he should be proud in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt

the proceedings to announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 122.

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Unfortunately, Mr. O'Toole has no say on this. We have no further debate on this issue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The debate is then deemed adjourned.

Orders of the day.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Bill 172, that's the diversion bill—the bill that came in at the time when the auditor's report was introduced in the House. Of course, the government wanted to talk about something else, so they brought in Bill 172.

It was first introduced about 18 months ago, I think, and it sat on the shelf. Of course, people should understand, when talking about Bill 172, that this bill will not create one more seat at any venue and this bill will not save one thin dime for anyone buying a ticket to an event. I think that is the important part of keeping in mind what this bill is all about. It was brought in after a Bruce Springsteen concert where tickets were greatly inflated. I think that concert took place in New Jersey. There was also a concert, I believe, in Calgary at about the same time, when there were problems with greatly inflated ticket prices. Of course, this government reacted to public opinion with a piece of legislation that had not been very well thought out.

There are any number of companies who sell or resell tickets. The ones that are controversial of course are sold above the face value of the ticket; others are sold at greatly reduced prices because the venues aren't full and the supply is outstripping the demand. But those tickets that sell for greatly inflated prices break the law as it now stands in Ontario. You can't sell tickets above the face value. It's called scalping, and the laws in Ontario prevent scalping, or are supposed to prevent scalping, from taking place. So if the government were serious about this, they would, of course, have some enforcement of the anti-scalping laws that exist in the province today. That may be an unpopular thing to do in the public. Quite often, the public who don't have time to buy tickets or don't know exactly what their availability is going to be

tend to buy tickets at the last minute, and those are scalped tickets. It's kind of a victimless crime. If someone wants to buy a ticket and they pay an inflated price for those tickets, they get what they want and the scalper gets what they want. It's kind of a victimless crime. Be that as it may, if this government was serious about preventing scalping, they could enforce the law as it now stands.

Of course, this government doesn't have a very good record on enforcing the law as it now stands. On fully 50%, or very close to 50%, of the cigarettes that are sold in this province, federal and provincial taxes are not collected. They are illegal cigarettes, yet these cigarettes come from a very few sources, perhaps two sources, in the province and are distributed across the province. Yet this government can't find the smoke shacks that they are sold from and don't seem to be able to find the tractor-trailer trucks that are carrying these cigarettes, and therefore don't enforce that law, in the same way that they don't enforce the scalping laws in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Do you have to buy scalped tickets to get cigarettes?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: He's not speaking on the bill; that's my point.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently the member from Essex isn't able to comprehend the similarities between not enforcing the law when it deals with scalped tickets and of not enforcing the law when it deals with illegal cigarettes. What we're talking about here is not enforcing the law of the land. This government has a terrible record when it comes to enforcing the law of the land. They don't do it on illegal cigarettes and they don't do it on scalped tickets either. When it comes to law and order, this government's record is sadly, sadly lacking.

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What does Bill 172 do? Bill 172 is a very thin bill; it's a page and a half, and that includes the translation. It says that it's "to provide that it is an offence for related primary and secondary sellers to make available for sale in Ontario tickets for admission to the same event." What that does, of course—there's only one company in Ontario that does that: Ticketmaster and TicketsNow.

Ticketmaster is a seller of tickets for an organization. Whether it be live plays or whether it be baseball games or hockey games, they will hire someone to sell and distribute their tickets for them. Ticketmaster is a company that does this and does it rather well. I think it's the largest ticket distributor in North America. It also has a secondary company that will buy tickets that someone has purchased that they no longer need or they've purchased them on speculation, one or the other, and they will resell those tickets. That is done through TicketsNow, and there are any number of other companies that do this business as well; Stub Master is one, and there are half a dozen others.

What those secondary sellers do is to ensure that you get a viable ticket—in other words it is not a counterfeit ticket—and they ensure that this viable ticket will get you into the venue and will be accepted at the box office when you show up. That's a very important thing in today's environment because it's so easy to counterfeit tickets and it's so easy to distribute counterfeit tickets that as a buyer of those tickets, you want to ensure that you're getting a viable ticket that will get you into the venue. That's what TicketsNow does.

The rumour was—it was denied by Ticketmaster—that Ticketmaster diverts tickets to TicketsNow. In other words, before the tickets go on sale, TicketsNow gets a whole bunch of tickets from Ticketmaster and they are sold at a premium price.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is confusing.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It is somewhat confusing; apparently the government can't figure it out. But it's not all that confusing. Ticketmaster strenuously denies in their press releases, they deny in person, they've denied this to the government; they've had meetings with the Attorney General and they've denied that tickets are diverted to TicketsNow. This bill will not affect any other ticket seller in Ontario except for Ticketmaster and TicketsNow. So this bill is aimed at one private sector company, TicketsNow. That seems a little onerous, even for this government, which has not been business-friendly, to pick on one company that denies they're doing what the government accuses them of doing. The government has not been able to show any proof whatsoever that this is taking place in Ontario.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Urban myths.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a bunch of urban myth, as the member from Thorold-Welland talks about. An urban myth, and yet they've brought legislation into this House to try and deny this private sector company from carrying on its legal business in this province. Even for this government, I think they have perhaps struck a new low when picking on businesses and creating a playing field that is anything but level. It's a sad day in Ontario when individual companies are targeted by legislation.

I think in the first part of my truncated speech I mentioned that I would be surprised if this bill ever saw the light of day again, but it's back, and I don't understand why the government keeps bringing this bill forward. I think that perhaps there's a debate in the Liberal Party. I think there are those who would see this bill as being what it is: something that should not come forward. There's another sector over there which sees this bill as something that should come forward.

I think the Premier is probably on the side of the naysayers, that this bill should not come forward. But I think it's fair to say that the province is aware that the Premier is travelling to China on a trade mission. He's out of the way for two weeks, and right away this bill comes before the House. I wonder if something isn't amiss in the hierarchy—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We're running amok.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Running amok, is that what the official House leader of the government said? The government is running amok. Of course, without the guidance and the leadership of the Premier, that could very well be the case.

Thank you for that, House Leader. It's always nice to have clarity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time being close to 10:15, this House will adjourn until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: Today is Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario awareness day. We've got IBAO delegates from Fort Frances all the way to Fenelon Falls here today. I'd like to introduce the CEO, Randy Carroll; Bryan Yetman, who is the president; and Peter Burns, who is the incoming president. They're going to be here at Queen's Park today, and at 5 p.m. in the dining room IBAO is going to hold a reception. Everybody is welcome to come and meet your local brokers.

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's my pleasure to introduce Rick Orr from Stratford, who's visiting today with the IBAO. Welcome, Rick.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my great pleasure to introduce the parents and brother of a page from Willowdale. The page's name is Anika Szabo. Her father, Frank Szabo, is here; her mother, Zsuzsa Alberti, is here; and her younger brother Markus is here. I know Markus wants to be a page someday, too. Welcome to the Legislature. Your daughter is doing a fine job.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great pleasure. I know that there have been other introductions of the insurance brokers, but I'd just like to welcome Brenda Duffy from my riding of Leeds-Grenville, here with the insurance brokers group.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Ajax-Pickering and page Olivia Kelly, to welcome family friend and former legislative page Matthew Kostuch, as well as Jessica Kostuch, Kristen Kostuch and Christine Kostuch, to the members' gallery today. Welcome back to Matthew particularly.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I think I see, sitting over there in the west gallery, Patricia Krawec from Thunder Bay, with the insurance brokers association as well. I think that's her. How are you doing; wave if it is. Yes, thank you. I welcome her to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Likewise, Mr. Speaker, I think I see Steve Wagler there from New Hamburg, who is here with the insurance brokers as well. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy denied that he's planning to expand the \$53-million hidden tax the McGuinty Liberals currently make Ontario families pay for hydro. He said, "We will not be applying those fees to the gas industry nor will we be applying those fees to the electricity industry." But the minister has a track record of backtracking on what he has said about the long-term energy plan and forecast analyses, having them ready for hydro bills for Ontario families by mid-October.

So I have to ask the minister: Are the McGuinty Liberals planning a fee, tax, premium, levy, toll, bill, duty, compulsory contribution or, specifically—and I quote—a "special purpose charge" to hydro or natural gas?

Hon. Brad Duguid: No—

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm trying to respond, Mr. Speaker, over the hubbub over there. I haven't even started yet, and they're already heckling.

As I said yesterday, no, we're not planning on doing that. And I'll tell you what else we're not planning to do: We're not planning to take us back to where you want to take us when it comes to energy. We're not planning to put the use of coal up 127% like they did when they were in power. Indeed, instead, we're going to be out of coal by 2014, making sure that we have cleaner air and healthier outcomes for our kids and grandkids.

I'll tell you what else we're not going to do. We're not going to kill those 50,000 jobs we're creating in clean energy, jobs that their leader wants to kill. The people of this province need those jobs. That party should come clean—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: That's an interesting response and certainly contrary to past actions. In March, the Ontario PC caucus exposed the regulation to create a special purpose charge, also known as a hidden hydro tax. A month later, the C.D. Howe Institute published a report on the hidden tax on hydro and natural gas, which said, "On its face, the levy is a tax." This summer, the Ontario Energy Board released a decision that showed the McGuinty Liberals plan to expand the hidden tax to natural gas next year and were ready to fight for the taxation power.

All these documents call it a tax and say it is coming next year. Suddenly, the minister says that it isn't. What's changed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: What probably should have changed is her supplementary, because she obviously didn't hear my first answer. The answer is no. The answer was no yesterday, it was no last week and it's no

today. You can ask me another supplementary, and the answer is still going to be no.

But I can tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to kill the 600 jobs that we're creating in Windsor that your leader wants to kill. We're not going to kill the 800 jobs we're creating in Guelph through our Clean Energy Act that your leader wants to kill. We're not going to kill the 1,200 jobs we're creating in Kingston that their party wants to kill, through their lack of support for clean energy in this province. We're not going to kill the 200 jobs in Oakville that we're creating through our clean energy initiatives but that they want to kill. We're not going to kill the 1,000 jobs in Welland.

We're creating jobs in this province. We're building a clean energy economy. It's over their opposition that we're doing it, but we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I certainly heard the minister's response, and I'd like to know why the sudden change of heart, because in its April 22 report, the C.D. Howe Institute points out that the McGuinty Liberals ordered the Ontario Energy Board to collect this tax. It not only said that the OEB levy is likely unconstitutional, but said, "In the event of a successful constitutional challenge ... the province would be under a legal obligation to return the revenues."

Ontario families have already paid the \$53-million hidden hydro tax this year, before the minister suddenly let on that he has had a major change of heart here. When were the minister and the Premier planning to tell Ontario families that they're refunding what they've already paid for this illegal tax?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the answer is no, and it will continue to be no. But I think maybe what the party opposite needs to start talking to Ontarians about is what their leader is suggesting they want to do. They're talking about this optional time-of-use scheme, which they've been talking about now for a few weeks. We've looked into that, and I tell you what that scheme is going to do: It's going to drive up consumer energy rates. They're trying to put in place a duplicate system of billing that's going to do nothing but increase administration for local distribution companies.

1040

Guess where those administration costs come from. They come from the very ratepayers. They get up day in and day out and talk about the fact that they don't support increases when it comes to energy rates, yet their policies would do just that.

You can't have it both ways. You're either going to support our efforts to build a strong, clean, reliable and affordable system of energy or you're not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again to the Minister of Energy and his sudden change of heart: The minister's revelation yesterday that the hidden taxes won't apply to hydro and natural gas is news to energy companies and consumers who are fighting against the taxes at the Ontario Energy Board.

How and when did the Minister of Energy notify them that the McGuinty Liberals are now scrapping the special purpose charges?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, the answer stays no. It was no three questions ago, it's no now, it will be no after her next supplementary, and it will be no after her following question.

We're working very, very hard to ensure that we improve the system of energy that we inherited from them. That system of energy did not have enough supply to meet demand, so we've had to create 8,000 new megawatts of power to ensure that Ontario families would have an energy system they can count on. We've had to improve our transmission and distribution system. We've built over 3,000 kilometres of transmission and distribution. We've upgraded that to ensure our system is more reliable.

We're working very, very hard to clean up our energy production and to get out of coal by 2014.

It would be nice to have the support of the members opposite, but they want to go back to where we were seven years ago. They want to go back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The minister shifted gears again. He's saying that the charges won't apply to gas and hydro, but the Ontario Energy Board says they will. So does the Consumers Council of Canada, which led a constitutional challenge of this \$53-million charge that's being placed on Ontario consumers. They argue that the hidden hydro tax "meets the classic definition of an indirect tax.... This is general revenue for general use."

The board agreed with them and said, "There is a serious question to be tried" of whether the hidden taxes are constitutional.

As late as August, the energy minister was still fighting tooth and nail for Premier McGuinty's hidden tax. Please tell us, Minister: What changed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: A lot has changed in the last seven years; I can tell you that.

That party, when they were in office, was steadfastly against any initiative that involved conservation. Since the McGuinty government came to office, we, with the people of Ontario, have saved 1,700 megawatts of power over the last seven years. That's a phenomenal increase in terms of conservation initiatives.

We look forward to bringing forward our long-term energy plan, which is going to provide greater stability and certainty when it comes to energy in this province. Unlike those guys, we're no longer planning hour to hour to keep the lights on. What we're doing is we're planning

20 years in advance. We're planning well into the next generation to ensure that we pass on an energy system that's strong, reliable and clean to that next generation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The case heard by the Ontario Energy Board just weeks ago wasn't just about hydro receiving the \$53-million tax. Consumers Council of Canada warned again that "Ontario will likely impose similar levies on customers of the province's two biggest gas utilities, raising an additional \$100 million or more in total."

Natural gas companies and consumers are worried enough about the new hidden taxes that they took part in the OEB hearings, where the Attorney General fought for the power to keep collecting the taxes.

Now the McGuinty Liberals are backtracking once again. Is it because of the efforts of the PC caucus or because Premier McGuinty broke the law to collect these hidden taxes?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I predicted, I guess for the sixth time, the answer is no, we're not doing that.

But what I will say is this: We will not do what they did. We will not disinvest from the energy system. We will continue to invest in our energy infrastructure. We're not going to leave the next generation in the lurch like you left our generation.

After their years in office, they had the use of coal going up 27%, polluting our air, impacting the health of ourselves and our kids. By 2014, we'll be one of the first jurisdictions in the world—indeed, something that all Ontarians will take some pride in—to be completely out of coal.

We will continue to invest in building a strong system of energy. We'll continue to ensure that Ontario families have a power system that they can count on. That stands in stark contrast to what they did seven years ago, and it still stands in stark contrast to where they want to go in the years ahead.

We're going to stand by Ontario families to ensure they have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, in response to questions about donations to the Ontario Liberal Party, CEOs of public utilities said that they gave because that is how they got access to this government. Does the minister think that families paying sky-high electricity rates want to see their money spent on political fundraisers?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party failed to disclose yesterday in her questioning in this House that she in fact had accepted contributions from fully regulated energy companies. The leader of the third party accepted a \$1,000 contribution to her leadership campaign.

I had to be very careful, sir; I didn't want to use language that would offend this House to describe the leader, but I did find a very interesting quote from Shakespeare, Mr. Speaker, where he says, "Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I would like to hear the honourable member's supplementary.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Once again, we see a growing gap between what the government says and what the government does. People paying sky-high hydro rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. That was a grand total of 13 seconds from when I asked the members to come to order till I sat down and had to stand again.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People paying sky-high hydro bills expect that the money that they pay to the utility company, that they own, covers the cost of electricity—it's pretty simple—not the costs of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Will this government finally do the right thing and simply ban donations from public utilities today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, Mr. Speaker, out of respect to you, I'd like to quote from Molière before I respond to that. He said, "One should examine oneself for a very long time before thinking of condemning others." What made me think of that? That party accepted thousands of dollars from Enwave, whose shareholders are public entities: the city of Toronto and OMERS.

Mr. Speaker, you may want to caution the member opposite that she could seriously injury herself falling off of her high horse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's apparent that the real problem is that the finance minister and Acting Premier doesn't know the difference between a public company and a private company. That's obviously the problem that this government has. They've lost touch.

Public utilities are saying that this is simply—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Public utilities are saying this is simply the way Ontario works. Canadian Press reports, "The utility viewed the Liberal fundraisers as necessary networking events." How can the minister claim that he's running an open and accountable government, which is what this government claims all the time, when public utilities say they need to attend Liberal fundraisers just to do their jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, Ralph Waldo Emerson suggested that leaders like the leader of the third party ought to go put your creed into deed.

Let's reveal a little bit more of what our friends in the party opposite did. They accepted \$1,200 from Five Nations Energy and failed to disclose that yesterday or to disclose it as a public utility. That's a non-profit utility owned by Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Kashechewan First Nations. The tone of the question suggests that the member opposite hasn't done any of this when, in fact, we have more examples to talk about. They've been doing it; they've been doing it for years. You know what? It's just another example of how little credibility they have on issues of this nature.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The minister says his government is open and accountable. It's a refrain we hear all the time. But at least four publicly owned hydro companies have recently hired lobbyists. Horizon Utilities Corp., a municipally owned corporation in the cities of Hamilton and St. Catharines, has paid Liberal insiders Andrew Steele and David MacNaughton to lobby the province. Why should Ontario families and ratepayers, who are already facing skyrocketing hydro bills, pay Liberal insiders to lobby for publicly owned corporations?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What people do remember—and we'll talk more about that member's own record in the supplementaries. But I think what the people of Ontario will remember are some of the things this party has done to ensure openness and transparency. We protected northern representation, keeping them with 11 ridings. We have provided real-time disclosure to make democracy more transparent, with real disclosure political donations so the NDP could no longer hide \$7,400 donations from Suncor. We banned taxpayer-funded partisan ads. We did the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that made sure the Auditor General signs off on the books before an election. This party has a record of openness and transparency. It's only after a little bit of scrutiny we find out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Toronto Hydro has a lobbyist, and until recently, Thunder Bay Hydro did, too. Lana Landry from Thunder Bay writes this: "In this past four months my hydro bill has increased by more than \$100. My husband and I work hard.... Lately, it really feels like we will never get ahead in saving money."

Why are Ms. Landry and her family paying for lobbyists when hydro CEOs should be able to pick up the phone and call the energy minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The honourable member opposite forgets to inform the people of Ontario that she was part of Hamilton city council when they hired Strategy Corp. to lobby for them. It didn't stop there. The member for city council also hired a lobbyist named John

Matheson to help her arrange meetings and make phone calls. The member for Toronto—Danforth failed to inform Ontarians that he was a registered lobbyist with Greenpeace and the Ontario Nurses' Association. In fact, federal filings show that the member for Toronto—Danforth continued to be a lobbyist for nearly two months after he was elected an MPP.

There are always challenges in providing openness and accountability. No government has done more for openness and accountability than the McGuinty government. No government has done more to ensure taxpayers that they get good value for their money in all of the decisions we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No government has done more to ensure that public money goes into the pockets of their friends. That's what's happening in Ontario these days. Public money that's meant for hospitals, that's meant for universities, that's meant for colleges, that's meant for public utilities is being diverted to consultants, to lobbyists and to Liberal Party coffers, all with the McGuinty government's approval. This is what's happening in this province, and it's simply wrong.

Why should Ontario families believe that this government will make life more affordable, will make hydro rates more affordable, when it only seems to be concerned with rewarding their friends, insiders and their own Liberal, partisan war chest?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party lost all of her credibility after a line of questions yesterday and when we revealed the fact that what she was accusing this party of they've been doing for many years, in fact.

We have moved on a number of fronts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East, please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Trinity—Spadina.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have taken a number of steps to improve accountability, most recently the legislation that my colleague the Minister of Health introduced. Our hope is that the third party will support that legislation.

I would just remind you and the House that according to Charles Caleb Colton, "No sinners are so intolerant as those that have just turned saints." They've got a track record, and we'll continue to expose it for what it is: fallacy and phoniness all around.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, following question period, the Minister of Energy was asked by media about the special

purposes charge, also known as your hidden tax on hydro and natural gas. He told the media, "We will not be applying those fees to the gas industry," and no longer applying those to the electricity industry.

Are the hidden taxes on hydro and natural gas gone for good, or only for this, the election year?

Hon. Brad Duguid: For the seventh time, no, we're not raising any fees when it comes to our efforts to continue to invest in conservation. But that doesn't mean that we're going to take their advice and not continue to work hard on conservation with Ontarians. We have a lot of work to do with Ontarians when it comes to working very hard to ensure that we're conserving as much as we possibly can in this province. We're going to continue with that work and we're going to continue to ensure that Ontario is a global example when it comes to conservation.

We've saved over 1,700 megawatts of power. That's billions of dollars when it comes to what we would have had to build in terms of plants. It's very significant, and that saves, ultimately, ratepayers' dollars in the long run.

We're doing energy and we're doing it smart. We're going to continue to invest in conservation, unlike that party, who totally opposes conservation—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If the Minister of Energy wants Ontario families to take what he said about these hidden taxes seriously, he would scrap schedule D of the Green Energy Act, the part of the act that gives you this special secret taxing authority. You have yet to introduce legislation that would accomplish that, and you've backtracked so often you can't even keep your own current policy straight.

When can Ontario families and industry expect legislation that will repeal this section of the Green Energy Act that gives you those secret taxing powers?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We know that the party opposite opposes the Green Energy Act and the 50,000 jobs that come with it. We know that because they stand in this place and oppose those investments day in and day out, while their members join us in cutting the ribbons when those jobs across this province are being announced.

Will the member opposite join me in Sarnia—Lambton, where 800 jobs have been created? Will he go eyeball to eyeball with me and those 800 families that are getting work out of this Green Energy Act, and tell them that he and his—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the member from Renfrew, you just asked—

Mr. John Yakabuski: But he challenged the member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're challenging the Speaker. The member knows the rules. If he's not satisfied with an answer that he receives from a minister, he can call for a late show.

Minister?

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Hon. Brad Duguid: That's okay, Mr. Speaker. I'm taller on skates, I say to the member opposite.

Will the member go to Kingsville with me and meet those families in Kingsville, where they're getting 300 jobs, and tell those families that he and his leader oppose their jobs? Will the member go up to Timmins-James Bay, where 800 jobs are being created in the north? Will he join me in the north and tell those northerners that their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

INSURANCE RATES

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Deputy Premier: Every time Ontarians open another bill they get the shock of their lives. On Monday it's the hydro bill, and then on Tuesday it's the insurance bill. At a time when hard-pressed Ontarians can barely keep their heads above water, why won't this government listen to the insurance brokers, to the consumers' groups and to anti-poverty groups and ban the use of credit scores in the home insurance industry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have in fact banned the use of it in those areas over which we have complete jurisdiction, most recently in auto insurance. We recognize the challenges associated with tied selling and have taken steps to correct that.

We will continue to work with the industry and stakeholders, as we did in the most recent process, to bring forward a balanced set of reforms that will ensure Ontarians have good protection; that we don't protect those who abuse the system; and finally, ensure that rates grow at a very modest rate over time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ontarians are hurting, and the last thing they need is to open their bills and find insurance premiums that jumped 50% or even 100% just because they were a little late on a credit card payment. The province has banned the use of credit scores on auto insurance and I just can't understand, if it isn't valid for auto insurance, why the government insists that it's valid when it comes to home insurance.

Other provinces have already moved on this. There's a solid front of brokers and consumers' groups demanding the end to this profoundly unfair practice. Will this government ban the use of credit scores in determining home insurance premiums or, once again, is it going to cave in to powerful insurance lobbies and abandon Ontario homeowners?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the member's question draws into consideration the integrity of the NDP position on this. He suggested that insurance rates have gone up 50%; nothing could be further from the truth. Since 2003, they've gone up 5%. That's not according to me, that's according to the regulator, and that's over seven years.

It's passing fancy to see the member opposite, who wants to put insurance brokers out of business because he supports public auto insurance—it is passing fancy to see him doing that.

I say to the brokers from across Ontario, we'll work with you and with your industry to ensure that our insurance products are comprehensive, they're good products, the price increases are modest and they serve all Ontarians well, including the industry itself.

PATIENT SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The first week of November is marked by the Canadian Patient Safety Institute as Canadian Patient Safety Week. Since 2005, this has become a national annual campaign as part of the institute's mandate to build and advance a safer health system for Canadians. I have heard that implementing electronic medical records is one of the ways that we can make our health care system safer for patients, so I would ask the Minister of Health: Are we making progress on this front, and how will electronic medical records help patient safety?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the remarkable member from Oak Ridges-Markham for this question. The member opposite is absolutely right: Implementing electronic medical records helps us make Ontario's health system safer.

Earlier this morning I stopped by Taddle Creek Family Health Team, just down the street, to announce that we have achieved a significant milestone when it comes to electronic medical records. More than five million Ontarians now have their care managed electronically. That's an increase of more than 80% in just one year.

There is no doubt that building an electronic health system does improve patient safety. One way patient safety is enhanced is that e-records can help doctors prevent medication errors when writing and renewing prescriptions. Another way is that doctors have access to the entire patient history and can prompt tests when—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to hear of the progress we're making on e-records, and I understand that these records will help make the patient experience safer.

Minister, there are many aspects to patient safety. It is my understanding that your ministry is compiling information on outbreaks in hospitals that also put too many people at risk. Just a few years ago, there were outbreaks of *Clostridium difficile*, or C. difficile, in hospitals across Ontario. In fact, my father was made very ill with this infection. There were even tragic deaths as a result of this outbreak.

I know that C. diff rates are one of the areas that we now report on. Can the minister please tell this House what is being done to promote patient safety in our hospitals, especially related to issues like C. diff rates?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ontario's hospitals have helped to make the province a leader in reporting patient safety indicator results and have created an unprecedented level of transparency.

Let me give you a couple of examples. C. difficile rates, as mentioned by the member, have steadily declined in this province since public reporting began, to the point where, in September 2010, the provincial rate was 0.23 cases per thousand patient days. That's compared to 0.39 in August 2008. That's almost half, and it's the lowest rate since public reporting began. And it's very promising to see that in this year's annual report, Ontario hospitals have improved their rate of hand hygiene compliance over last year.

I'm very proud of the progress that we're making, and I'm proud to recognize Patient Safety Week in Ontario.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The shift to time-of-use billing makes hydro most expensive from 7 to 11 a.m. Are you so out of touch that you don't understand you're hitting Ontario families when they have no choice but to use hydro when it is at its most expensive? Why is Premier McGuinty against Ontario families having a choice between time-of-use and flat-rate billing, as our leader Tim Hudak has suggested?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to respond to that. The reason why we oppose your leader's silly scheme is that it's going to drive costs up for consumers. It's something we simply don't want to do. It's going to make local distribution companies have to set up duplicate billing systems. That doesn't make sense. What it's also going to do is drive down the incentives to encourage consumers to shift off of peak use. What that's going to do is increase costs to the entire system.

Once again, the Tories come out with something that's simplistic, that's sloganistic, but at the same time just doesn't make sense and is going to drive costs up for consumers. They did it to consumers seven years ago when they cost us billions of dollars through their messing around with deregulation. They just want to do it again, and Ontarians are too smart to give them a chance. They did it to us once before, and we're not going to let them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Let me tell you what Ontario families are opposed to. They are opposed to you micro-managing every single decision. They are opposed to the Premier Dad, father-knows-best attitude, and they are so opposed to Ontario families being forced to pay more and more with every single asinine idea that you come up with in cabinet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw. What I meant to say was "random thought." It's just sometimes they match.

Premier McGuinty has said time-of-use pricing would save Ontario families, but people tell me they are paying more. The new time-of-use billing has hit families again at the end of the day when they come home from school and work. What do the McGuinty Liberals have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I strongly suggest that the Tory party get their act together when it comes to what they want to do with time of use. They're putting forward an initiative that would jack up rates for consumers, something that we adamantly oppose. We do not want to go there. We do not want to do what they want to do, and that's to make consumers pay for a duplicate billing system. We simply don't want to do that.

There was a time when they thought differently. I have a report here called "Energy for the Future." This is a report that comes from February 2006 and it was written by their energy critic, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. This is what it said: We have to invest in conservation to offset demand. We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks and consumption to off hours.

That's exactly what we're doing. Now, they've got their caucus standing up in opposition to that. We're working hard with Ontarians to do all we can to try to shift usage—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

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EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Robert Nagle from Hamilton Mountain wants to know why, after two years, he's still waiting for employment standards to get him the \$14,000 that his employer owes him. When you are unemployed, two weeks is too long to wait for money owed to you, but two years is simply a travesty. When will the minister finally fix the ridiculous and unacceptable delays at employment standards?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the opportunity to discuss how we've changed the Employment Standards Act and allowed for a much quicker response when it comes to claims. That being said, I have to commend our employment standards officers. They are closing a record number of claims these days. They are closing 40% more claims than they were doing just two years ago.

But that being said, we've changed the Employment Standards Act to where we can now expedite claims by having those claimants either contact their employer through email, phone or mail, and they can, through that contact, be able to get their money in their hands a lot quicker.

I will say to the member that, under this specific case, the individual should contact the ministry again, look at the new process and how we're expediting claims.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Nagle tells us that his MPP advised that when and if he ever gets his money, it will only be \$10,000 because that's the maximum employment standards can award.

Why hasn't the McGuinty government changed this legislation to protect workers and ensure they get every cent that is owed to them? Under the current system, the employer is rewarded for delaying, denying and not paying workers what they are owed.

When will the Minister of Labour start protecting workers and change the ridiculous law?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Our record speaks for itself. This party has been on the side of vulnerable workers. This party has been assisting and protecting workers with changes to legislation, and part of those changes has been through the Employment Standards Act.

We're making it much easier for any employee who feels they've been mistreated or feels their rights have been violated when it comes to employment standards, so that they can make their claims a lot more easily.

We have added an additional \$10 million to our employment standards officers to help claimants through the process, and we've done this in a number of ways. We understand there are vulnerable workers out there and they need more assistance. We provide services in 23 different languages. We want to eliminate those barriers and make it as easy as possible for those hard-working men and women to get the money they are owed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: This question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I had the opportunity to visit the James Bay area. I paid close attention, as I know all members of the select committee did, when earlier this year, Chief Solomon of the Mushkegowuk council that represents First Nations communities near the James Bay coast declared a state of emergency because of youth suicides. We continue to hear through the media about First Nations youth in crisis in other parts of the north, specifically at Fort Hope.

I know from personal experience that our government is working hard to build stronger relationships with our aboriginal peoples and communities. This is a serious issue and it requires both immediate, intermediate and long-term solutions.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I know the federal government has responsibility for a large number of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: An important question, and let me just say at the outset, I'd like to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, my colleague Kevin Flynn and colleagues all around the Legislature for

the great work they did on the mental health report, the all-party legislative committee report.

The issue with respect to youth suicide in many northern communities—indeed, also southern communities—of First Nations is a very serious one. I did speak to Chief Solomon from Kashechewan about five months ago, and I know my colleagues the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Minister of Health and others are working on a longer-term solution.

We said, "What can we do in the short term?" What we did was we worked with the Minister of Health Promotion. We've got four youth wellness workers in three different communities to start engaging young people in positive sports and related activities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: It is important that our government is responding to the concerns brought forward by the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council and that we are listening to Fort Hope's concerns, and I feel that partnering with a private and not-for-profit organization is an important part of helping First Nations communities.

In the 2010 speech from the throne, the government recognized "that in a time of more limited resources, we all need to work together to move our province forward." It is important to recognize that private and not-for-profit organizations play a key role in government priorities such as poverty reduction. Can the minister tell us how the Ontario government used this advice to partner with other organizations to help address some of the challenges faced by aboriginal youth?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member is right.

We had four youth wellness workers in three different communities along the James Bay coast. Last week, with my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, we joined Canadian Tire Jumpstart. They're investing in activity kits for seven communities along the coast and they're also funding a community coach in an additional community. The goal is really to make sure that the young people in a community can see a brighter tomorrow than they saw yesterday.

In addition, with my colleague who is now the Minister of Energy, the previous minister in this post, Right to Play has worked with community donors such as the Tanenbaum foundation to fund a worker in Moosonee and Moose Factory. In addition to that, we are working with the Belinda Stronach Foundation.

We've provided money on behalf of the people of Ontario to provide five communities in the province of Ontario with one laptop per child—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, RBC and the Insurance Bureau of

Canada have both raised the alarm bell about growing fraud in the auto insurance sector. Their reports show fraud on the rise in Ontario, costing \$1.3 billion annually. They say that unnecessary medical assessments are increasingly eating up premium dollars.

In FSCO's five-year auto insurance review, recommendation 21 was: "Consider having treatment plans completed only after a referral is made by the health professional primarily responsible for the claimant's rehabilitation (in most cases a family physician)." Minister, why did you fail to implement a recommendation that could have had a real impact on this type of fraud?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, we brought forward a range of changes to prevent specifically that kind of fraud, and that member's party didn't support it. But that shouldn't be a surprise, because insurance rates went up 43% in the last two years of their administration.

We worked with the insurance industry. We worked with brokers. We worked with a range of others.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind too, as well—they like to cackle over there, but they voted against lowering auto insurance rates by voting against Bill 5 in 2003. They voted against and didn't support the range of changes we brought about to ensure greater competitiveness and to help wipe out the very abuse that the member opposite speaks of.

These are always difficult balances to find. We found the appropriate balance with the support of many in the industry and with the support of consumers, and we will continue to keep a lid on skyrocketing car insurance premiums.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: The minister gives a very partisan answer to a legitimate question.

The Globe and Mail reports that target-and-bullet schemes profit by involving questionable medical clinics and supposed victims billing insurers hundreds of thousands of dollars from a single car accident to cover assessments and treatments that in some cases don't even take place.

Minister, American states put a concentrated effort into deterring fraud. As a result, Canadian investigators say they have tracked insurance fraudsters from other jurisdictions to Canada.

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As the minister responsible, you need to get serious about fraud. Will you at least consider taking steps to protect consumers from unscrupulous toll operators who take kickbacks from fraudsters?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did, and they didn't support that. In fact, here's what one of their caucus members, Mr. Klees, had to say: "We have to get government out of that industry to the degree we can and allow the insurance companies to set their rates and to set policies."

We think it's about more than that. We think it is about ensuring a balance. No government has done more to take fraud out of the system than this government. No

government has a better track record in keeping insurance premiums down. In fact, in the first four years of our administration, they went down 16%. Over the life of the administration they went up only 5%, well below the rate of inflation.

These are difficult balances to reach. I'm glad that, working with the consumers and with the industry, we found the proper balance to help ensure that the 43% increase in premiums they saw under that government, under the Conservative government, will never happen again.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. As winter comes to northwestern Ontario, families are being squeezed with sky-high hydro bills. Eliana Wittwer from Dryden writes this: "I just want to be very clear and state my point, that HST should definitely be taken off the hydro bill. It has made life so much more difficult, to make ends meet and to keep up with paying the bills."

I think the minister needs to explain to Ms. Wittwer and others like her why this government voted yesterday against the NDP motion to do exactly that and take the HST off the hydro bills.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have provided personal tax cuts in the amount of \$12 billion over four years, because we have the most generous harmonized sales tax credit in the country and because we are helping consumers with a special property and energy tax credit, which that member and her party voted against.

We are facing the challenges in our electricity system full on to ensure that we never have the problems we had before. By investing in transmission, by creating jobs, by investing in generation—all of these initiatives will help ensure a more reliable and cost-effective energy system.

The tax package we gave to all Ontarians, which that member voted against, was the most generous in Ontario history. We'll continue to practise good public policy in the interest of all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Jim Irish, a Kenora senior on a fixed income, writes: "The vote on Monday regarding the removal of HST on home hydro is crucial to the quality of daily life for many seniors in northwestern Ontario...."

Mr. Irish needs a break on his hydro bill. Why have the McGuinty Liberals rejected our proposal to give seniors like him a break by taking the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, I hope she's writing back to all the correspondents she's quoting and telling them that she wants to raise the provincial sales tax by 1%, because that's what she and her party told this government.

The leader again—conveniently—only tells a part of the story. The leader doesn't want all the facts out there because it will undermine her credibility. She doesn't want to tell people that they had a huge \$12-billion

personal tax cut. She doesn't want to tell those people that if we let the system go the way it was going under previous governments, we would have had deep, deep problems well into the future.

These are difficult choices, but they're the right choices. We have chosen to cut personal taxes. We have given generous sales tax credits and have created energy credits for all Ontarians. That's what good public policy is. That's what credible public policy is.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Kuldip Kular: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton, there has been a lot of talk regarding municipal funding and financial commitments by our government. In fact, the leader of the official opposition recently visited my community of Brampton and suggested that provincial funding has been slowed in my community and, in fact, in communities all across Ontario. He mentioned a lot of financial pressures and suggested that these were attributed to our government and its relationship with the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please outline for the House and the constituents in Bramalea-Gore-Malton exactly what this government is doing to help alleviate the burden of local taxpayers?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for the question. It is truly unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition would suggest that we're underfunding municipalities. When we came to power, we understood the pressures that municipalities were faced with, pressures imposed upon them by the previous Progressive Conservative government. The Harris government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was a cabinet minister, downloaded the cost of many services like public health, land ambulance, ODSP and social housing onto the backs of the municipal taxpayer and didn't provide any extra cash.

When we formed government, we put an end to the Conservative record against municipalities. We are now in the process of uploading the costs of several services because we understand the burden placed on municipalities by that government when they were in power.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kuldip Kular: While it's unfortunate the leader of the official opposition would make such comments on our relationship with municipalities, I'm happy to hear that our government continues its commitment to upload the cost of services which were downloaded by the previous government.

My question is again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I couldn't help but notice that your answer did not make any mention of financial commitments. The minister did make mention of our government's plan to upload the costs borne from a variety of circumstances but did not touch on what it will mean to my community. Constituents in my riding want to know

what they will be saving and how their pocketbooks will be affected.

To the minister: Could he please tell this House what these uploads will mean for my community financially?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: That, again, is a very fair and legitimate question. This year the taxpayers in Peel region will see an estimated savings of more than \$27 million through these uploads. By 2018, we will have finished the uploading process and municipalities across Ontario will end up seeing a \$1.5-billion-a-year benefit.

We all remember that when the official opposition was the government, PC stood for public cuts, public chaos, public confrontation. That's them. That is what they're all about. On this side of the House, the McGuinty government is about uploading services, uploading costs, uploading burden, because we understand what municipalities' pressures are. We understand that we have to work together. It's not about fighting. It's about collaboration. It's about getting along—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Milton hospital was built to service a community of 30,000 people. Today we have a population of 90,000 and we're expected to reach 180,000 within 10 years.

In 2007, Milton began a process to expand its hospital. For three years, the people of Milton have waited, with no answers and no movement from your ministry. Over the same time, this government's health minister has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on consultants, enough to cover the cost of Milton hospital's expansion.

Minister, please explain to my consultants—

Laughter.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: —to my constituents; you can also explain to your consultants—why your priority has been hiring consultants, as opposed to front-line needs of the Milton hospital.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very proud of the investments that we have made in improving and rebuilding the infrastructure of our hospitals. Yes, the project in Milton is one of the ones that we are looking at, as you well know.

But let's just look: 18 new hospitals built or under way since 2003. These are new hospitals: William Osler, Royal Ottawa Health Care, West Parry Sound Health Centre, Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, Mattawa General Hospital, Runnymede Healthcare Centre, Bloorview Kids Rehab, the regional hospital in Sudbury, the Pembroke Regional Hospital, Sioux Lookout Meno Ya Win Health Centre. These are all hospitals that are complete.

Under construction: Niagara Health System, North Bay Regional Health Centre, the Sault Area Hospital, the Woodstock General Hospital, Bridgepoint Health, Sarnia Bluewater Health, Cornwall—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, you apologized for the eHealth 2.0 fiasco. You did it sincerely, and you did it with emotion. Yet that answer tells me—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member he should be speaking through the Chair.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: While you spent hundreds of millions of dollars over the past three years on consultants, you were delaying the essential expansion of the Milton hospital. We're not talking about other hospitals or LHINs; we're talking about money that was spent by your ministry. I think the message is very clear: My constituents mean a lot less than your Liberal consultants.

Minister, for the people of Milton, please explain why you believe it's okay to spend their hard-earned tax dollars on consultants instead of the much-needed hospital.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The members on the government side will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are also expanding more cancer centres in Ontario than ever before in the province's history. We've got 15 cancer projects: Eight are complete, and six are under construction.

Complete: the Ottawa Hospital Queensway Carleton site, the Hamilton Health Sciences Juravinski Cancer Centre, the Grand River Hospital, the Credit Valley Hospital Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre, Lakeridge Health R. S. McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre, Sudbury Regional Hospital, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Under construction: the Ottawa Hospital at the Ottawa General Hospital site, the Royal Victoria Hospital of Barrie—I have to take a breath, there are so many—Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, the Kingston General Hospital Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario, Credit Valley Hospital and Niagara Health System.

We have 117 projects under way. We are very proud of the capital. When you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. On November 6, US Steel will be in a legal position to lock out members of Local 1005, United Steelworkers, who are employed at the Hilton Works plant in Hamilton. US Steel has continually thumbed its nose at both the federal and provincial governments since, aided by this government's money, it took ownership from Stelco in 2007.

When will this government take action to protect the steelworkers of Hamilton?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd remind the member opposite that the money he referred to, in fact, went into the pensions of those workers. He can torque up his language all he wants; that is the simple reality.

We have worked in a number of situations, including when this problem first emerged. We will continue to work with all the parties interested in the interests of protecting jobs and, by the way, pensions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: These jobs, critical to Hamilton's economy, support secondary industries and even some sole suppliers of steel-related products to these mills. They may all close. If this lockout, like the Lake Erie plant's, lasts many months, we can anticipate foreclosures, bankruptcies and more pressure on Hamilton's social safety net.

We don't want the sympathy this government has stated—"We care about the workers"—or stories that they'll retrain them.

They make \$25 to \$30 an hour. What jobs of equal—I repeat, equal—financial and economic value is this government planning for the steelworkers of the city of Hamilton?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This is an incredibly difficult time for those workers, their families and the community of Hamilton.

I do need to inform the House, first of all, that Ministry of Labour mediators are available at all times. The Ministry of Economic Development remains in contact with the company.

I should also remind the member opposite, as he torques up his rhetoric, that US Steel plants in Michigan, Illinois and Minnesota have also been idled. That adds to the layoffs and closures at other plants.

This is a serious matter that ought to be taken seriously. We've invested \$150 million to protect the pensions of those workers. All the services in the government of Ontario will be available to those workers and to that community, as they have been up until now, to help deal with these very difficult circumstances.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. David Oraziatti: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. We're all aware of the challenges the forestry sector continues to face, including rising operating costs and the high Canadian dollar, but our government has taken unprecedented steps to support Ontario's forestry industry. Through the forest sector initiatives program, we've made available \$500 million in combined grants and loan guarantees to stimulate manufacturing, equipment renewal and energy conservation. These commitments are getting results.

Recently, the minister informed us that a \$25-million investment we're making in Terrace Bay Pulp will assist in the restart of the mill and return to work roughly 300 employees.

This past Friday—more progress—we announced that St. Marys Paper is reopening in Sault Ste. Marie. Minister, could you please tell us how we made possible the reopening of St. Marys Paper?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before the minister starts, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I don't appreciate, and the members don't appreciate, the interjections across the floor that are obviously directed at each other. Please take those discussions outside the chamber.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is indeed a very, very good-news story—another good-news story in the forestry sector with the reopening of St. Marys Paper. Certainly I want to commend the extraordinarily hard work by the member for Sault Ste. Marie. To have this mill reopen is great news.

Very specifically, our government has provided St. Marys Paper with an \$8.8-million repayable loan, a loan that will mean that the operations at the mill will be resuming production very soon and that 170 workers are going back to work. We know this loan is going to help this mill move in a very different direction and help St. Marys take advantage of new opportunities in green energy and bio-economy opportunities. It is just simply a great good-news story.

More work: the Terrace Bay Pulp mill, 340 jobs; St. Marys Paper, 170 jobs. Great work by the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity—earlier in introductions, I neglected, in introducing page Olivia Kelly's friends, to introduce her mother, and I apologize. Welcome, Wendy Kelly, to Queen's Park today.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's my honour this afternoon to introduce some guests in the gallery to my right. We have Rick Hatt, who is a descendant of Major Richard Hatt, a veteran of the Battle of Lundy's Lane and whose remains lie buried in the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery, now threatened with relocation; Rick Hatt's wife, Catherine Hatt; Marjorie Stuart, cemetery volunteer and editor of Cemetery News with the Ontario Historical Society; Diane Clendenan, cemetery volunteer with the Ontario Genealogical Society; Steve Clendenan, vice-president, finance, the Ontario Genealogical Society; and Rob Leverty, executive director of the Ontario Historical Society. Probably

joining them will be Bob Crawford, secretary of the Ontario Genealogical Society. I welcome you this afternoon.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to introduce le consul de la République du Congo, M. Jean-Michel Itoua, qui est le père de la page Priscile. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I too want to take this opportunity to welcome my good friend the consul general from Congo here today. It's a real honour to have you here, and I'm sure it's a proud moment for you to be here to watch your daughter, Priscile, serve as a page in this Legislature. Welcome, consul general.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Later today many Ontario wineries will be participating in a tasting to select the Ontario Legislative Assembly wine for 2011. It's an important decision because that year is a significant milestone for the Ontario wine industry. It marks 200 years since Johann Schiller, the father of the Ontario wine industry, opened the first commercial winery in Ontario in what was known as Cooksville.

Since that time, Ontario's wines have received recognition for their quality around the world, particularly for the VQA and ice wines. The Ontario wine industry has grown in economic importance into one that directly employs over 6,000 people and generates over \$500 million in retail sales each year.

Ontario's wine industry contributes significantly to our tourism and agricultural industries. With over 17 million grapevines, Ontario is the country's leading grape producer, accounting for about 80% of all Canadian production.

Later today, I will be introducing a bill to mark this milestone by officially recognizing 2011 as the bicentennial of the Ontario wine industry. I hope that everyone will take advantage of this opportunity to celebrate and promote Ontario wines.

I want to congratulate all of our wineries and grape growers for being part of this milestone and for their hard work to make this industry such a great success. I wish them all the best in the upcoming bicentennial year.

I encourage all Ontarians to celebrate this accomplishment by trying new Ontario wines and visiting some of our beautiful wineries.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last Friday, October 29, I attended a ceremony to commemorate a new solar panel project on the late Jacques Beauchesne's farm in St. Isidore in the Nation municipality of my riding. I would

like to thank Minister Madeleine Meilleur for attending this event.

The St. Isidore solar panel project is a 10-megawatt project composed of 152,000 solar panels. The design, engineering and construction phases of this project have created more than 200 local jobs. This is one of the many projects that have been developed in my riding under our government's renewable energy standard offer program.

There are numerous benefits for my riding resulting from solar panel projects. They help to promote green energy, they bring revenue to the local economy and they ensure that businesses and families have stable, reliable sources of power.

Our government has a plan to invest in a strong, reliable and clean energy system that both families and businesses can count on. I am proud to see ongoing evidence of this in my riding.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last Friday, I attended the 70th annual banquet of the Wellington Federation of Agriculture.

In farming, as in so many industries, the future is always uncertain, but I have faith in the future. We should all have faith. We have good reason. Ontario has the best farmers in the world, and our farm families have held together with resilience and hope. We should be proud of the fact that their labour provides nourishment for a nation and a continent and for markets all over the world. Our farmers' professionalism, strengthened by that well-deserved pride, enables them to overcome adversity no matter what its origin.

Together in Wellington-Halton Hills, we have always supported supply management, better safety net programs, sensible environmental protection, an emphasis on research, and bringing new methods and technology to the farm—working together, striving to speak with one voice, and articulating a vision of the future for our farm families that allows them not only to survive but to thrive and prosper.

Through the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition paper, we know that the farming sector supports over 164,000 jobs. We know that its economic activity generates \$3.4 billion in revenue to the federal and provincial governments. Farming is big business, but it's individual farmers and farm families who work hard to make it so.

I call on this government to support their work, to listen to the OASC and its recommendations and to act to strengthen the farm sector for generations to come.

PAPER INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: In the last couple of days, the McGuinty Liberals have been trumpeting what they call a success in the pulp and paper industry in northern Ontario. Of course, what they're talking about is the start-up of one paper machine at the St. Marys mill in Sault Ste. Marie.

This leads me to ask: Why don't the McGuinty Liberals talk about the three paper machines that have been shut down in Kenora under their watch, or the two that have been shut down in Dryden under their watch, or the one that has been shut down in Fort Frances under their watch, or the eight paper machines that have been shut down in Thunder Bay under their watch, or the two that have been shut down in Red Rock under their watch, or the two that are still shut down in Sault Ste. Marie under their watch?

1510

Also, I wonder how it is that if we look to Quebec, there are 20-plus paper machines still operating in that province, providing thousands of good jobs for people—14 paper machines shut down across northern Ontario, with thousands of jobs lost, and paper machines in Quebec are still operating, with thousands of jobs continuing.

Or I look across the border into northern Minnesota: In International Falls, Minnesota, there are two paper machines operating; in Grand Rapids, two machines operating; in Duluth, one machine operating.

Why are so many shut down across northwestern Ontario?

DIABETES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As you will know, November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Today, more than nine million Canadians live with diabetes or pre-diabetes, a condition that, if left unchecked, puts more individuals at risk of developing the full diagnosis of type 2 diabetes.

More than 20 people are diagnosed with the disease every hour of every day. In this province alone, 1.2 million Ontarians have been diagnosed with diabetes, and that number is expected to rise to two million by 2020. Left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can result in a number of serious complications, including kidney failure, heart attack, stroke, blindness and limb amputations. Some 80% of Canadians living with diabetes die from a heart attack or stroke, and 42% of kidney dialysis patients have diabetes.

The cost to our health care system, as you can imagine, is immense, something in the order of about \$5 billion annually just to the province of Ontario. But there is good news: Diabetes can be prevented. With proper management, the complications can also be prevented or delayed and people can lead healthy lives.

This November, I encourage everyone to visit the government of Ontario's Stand up to Diabetes website to learn more about how to prevent and manage diabetes and to find out more about health care services and resources available to the community.

I also encourage Canadians, and Ontarians particularly, to visit the Canadian Diabetes Association website, diabetes.ca, to learn more and to read about some of the incredible volunteers, professionals and researchers who are living healthy with diabetes and, of course, advocating for the cause and breaking ground towards a cure.

November is Diabetes Awareness Month.

COMMUNITY AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege to rise today to recognize Community and Primary Health Care, a remarkable agency that continues to do great work in my riding.

On Thursday, CPHC executive director Ruth Kitson and board chairman John Conley will be here at Queen's Park to accept the 2010 Donner Canadian Foundation Award for excellence in the delivery of social services for seniors. They will receive the award from Lieutenant Governor David C. Onley, and they'll find out that day if they are winners of the overall \$20,000 William H. Donner Award for Excellence. I'm personally cheering for them, as are thousands of people in Leeds–Grenville and Lanark county who rely on CPHC's dedicated staff for an incredible variety of health care services every day.

We all know that these are difficult times in Ontario's health care sector, but thanks to the leadership and innovative approach of Ruth Kitson and her board, CPHC is ensuring that people are getting the care they so desperately need.

I congratulate CPHC on winning its third Donner award in the past five years. This award is more proof that CPHC is a role model for other health care agencies to follow, and it's a vote of confidence in their work as they move forward with very ambitious plans to build a health and wellness centre of excellence.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Kuldip Kular: Over the weekend, I had the fortune to attend an event in my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton that recognized 300 student volunteers working to improve the quality of life in their community.

This year, students from Volunteering Peel participated in Peel Planet Day, a program of planting trees, cleaning park grounds, building birdhouses for wildlife and joining environmental workshops. Not only were they greening Brampton and Malton, but through Volunteering Peel, the students were discovering the road to active citizenship.

Since 2005, Volunteering Peel has been helping students to meet the Ontario secondary school requirement of 40 hours of community service, a practice that instills within young Ontarians the virtue of volunteerism in our society.

Each year, more than five million Ontarians act as volunteers in as many as 45,000 non-profit organizations. This is in addition to the countless acts of volunteerism and selflessness that community members give to each other.

I would like to thank Gary Nickerson and Jordan Wong for their work in making this event happen and for

their tireless work in preparing Ontario's youth for active citizenship.

PATIENT SAFETY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Today, I stand to recognize the week that is marked by the Canadian Patient Safety Institute as Canadian Patient Safety Week.

Quality and safety are major themes in Ontario's health care system these days. Our government has been working very hard to advance a quality agenda in health care, to drive quality and value in every organization in every corner of this province. Our excellent care for all strategy is designed to ensure that Ontarians receive the best quality care anywhere and everywhere in this province today and in the years to come.

Safe care is but one aspect of quality care. When patients are protected from hospital-acquired infections, their health outcomes are better, their experience with the system is better, and the costs to the system are lower, all in keeping with the philosophy of the excellent care for all strategy.

In May 2008, this government launched our transparency in patient safety initiative. The hospital sector has worked closely with us to raise the bar and institute measures that help keep Ontario patients safe.

Between September 2008 and April 2009, hospitals began recording on eight patient safety indicators. We have been making significant progress in that time. One of the most significant indicators is C. difficile infection rates. They have steadily declined in Ontario since public recording began. The most recent numbers in September 2010 show that the provincial rate was 0.23 cases per thousand patient days compared to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION WEEK

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today in honour of Holocaust Education Week, which began yesterday and will continue until November 9. This year is a special year as we commemorate the 30th anniversary of Holocaust Education Week.

Throughout this week, the United Jewish Appeal and the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Centre will be holding the largest Holocaust education forum of its kind, featuring leading voices in Holocaust and human rights awareness at venues throughout the GTA and in the surrounding region.

I, myself, will be spending Friday morning visiting the members of Café Europa at Baycrest hospital with a number of Holocaust survivors who call Baycrest home.

I will also spend Friday afternoon at Forest Hill Collegiate with Canadian veteran and Flying Officer Ed Carter-Edwards as he tells his incredible and unique story to the students of Forest Hill Collegiate. Mr. Carter-Edwards was one of 168 Allied airmen who were incarcerated in Buchenwald in August 1944. Ed and his fellow airmen witnessed first-hand the horrors of

Buchenwald, one of the many dreaded death camps built by the Nazi killing machine.

Let us honour those who survived this horrific period in history by keeping the memory of those innocent victims alive. Let us reaffirm our dedication to the six million victims who were slaughtered so that this absolutely deplorable chapter in history will never be forgotten and, hopefully, never happen again. Let's remember them during Holocaust Education Week.

BIRTHDAY OF MEMBER'S DAUGHTER

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to wish a happy birthday to a remarkable little girl who's my daughter. My daughter, Shanae, is celebrating her 11th birthday today in Peterborough. I know she'll have a great day, and she certainly is the apple of her father's eye.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We wish her a happy birthday.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We're having a big birthday party for her next Monday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker will give you permission if you want to drive home right now.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated November 2, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INACTIVE CEMETERIES PROTECTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CIMETIÈRES INACTIFS

Mr. Brownell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to protect Ontario's inactive cemeteries / Projet de loi 126, Loi visant à protéger les cimetières inactifs de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim Brownell: By protecting our inactive cemeteries, this bill will help preserve the sanctity of our deceased, safeguard our history and heritage and provide clear guidelines to those looking to develop near or on the gravesites of Ontario.

As demonstrated by the Ontario Historical Society and the Ontario Genealogical Society in their work to stop the relocation of the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery where Major Richard Hatt, a veteran of the War of 1812, lies buried, it is of great public interest that our cemeteries be preserved and maintained in their original locations.

ONTARIO WINE INDUSTRY

BICENTENNIAL IN 2011

RECOGNITION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 RECONNAISSANT

L'ANNÉE 2011 COMME

LE BICENTENAIRE DE L'INDUSTRIE

VITICOLE DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to celebrate the success of the Ontario wine industry by recognizing the year 2011 as its bicentennial / Projet de loi 127, Loi célébrant la réussite de l'industrie viticole de l'Ontario en reconnaissant l'année 2011 comme le bicentenaire de cette industrie.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This bill recognizes the year 2011 as the bicentennial of the Ontario wine industry. The first commercial winery in Ontario was founded in 1811 by Johann Schiller, father of the Ontario wine industry. Since that time, the Ontario wine industry has grown in economic importance into one that directly employs over 6,000 people and contributes significantly to the tourism and agriculture of the province of Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DIWALI

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I rise today in the Legislature to recognize Diwali, the annual festival of lights beginning this Friday, November 5. Diwali is celebrated around the world and here in Ontario by Hindus, by Sikhs and by Jains. During the five days of festivities, houses are lit up with small clay lamps known as diyas, to signify the triumph of good over evil.

For many people, Diwali is a time of great celebration. It's a time to enjoy good food, fine clothes and to spend time with family and friends. In some rural areas around the world, people flock to melas, or fairs, in their villages and towns. For others, Diwali is a time of quiet contemplation and meditation.

But increasingly, Diwali is a global celebration, recognized and celebrated by people right around the world. This special celebration unites communities all over the world on both a religious and a social level. Although the festival of Diwali dates back centuries, its significance is still widely appreciated and celebrated in a variety of communities today.

The Diwali focus on light serves as a wonderful symbol of the truth and renewal of life, a symbol often present in many other religious traditions. In the face of today's unique challenges and pressures, this celebration is an excellent occasion to promote mutual respect and understanding, and share in the common values of tradition and faith.

As a province, this celebration helps us to recognize the rich diversity of our culture, the cornerstone of Ontario's success and prosperity. Celebrating Diwali also adds to the fabric of our nation and strengthens our social foundations by making our communities more dynamic, culturally rich and cohesive. With people from over 200 countries speaking more than 130 languages living in Ontario, our diversity brings us global connections, talents and skills. It is this diversity that enriches us socially, economically and culturally.

I think we can all be proud that the 7,000-year-old Diwali festival is being celebrated this week in communities across Ontario, such as Hamilton, Mississauga, Brampton and Toronto.

On behalf of the McGuinty government and all Ontarians, I wish all those observing Diwali a wonderful celebration. Happy Diwali to all. Namaste. Sat Sri Akal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries?

Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: As leader of the Ontario PC Party and on behalf of the PC caucus, I would like to invite all members of the House to join with the South Asian community in celebrating Diwali, the festival of lights.

Diwali is a festival and celebration that resonates with people of all faiths and backgrounds, and is an opportunity to reflect on the contributions made to our province by the South Asian community. It is one of the largest festivals in India and is celebrated with enthusiasm and happiness all over the world, including right here in Ontario in our South Asian community.

Diwali sees friends and family joining together in faith and prayers, exchanging gifts and sweets, and lighting candles to signify the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. For Hindus, Diwali is one of the most important holidays of the year, and it is a significant festival for Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists.

One of the best parts of being the Ontario PC leader is that I get to experience Ontario's diverse cultures first-

hand. As I travel the province and meet families from all different backgrounds, I notice more and more that as diverse as we are, there is a common thread that binds all of us. We all share values such as taking care of and celebrating our family, celebrating our community, working hard to provide a better life for our children and grandchildren, and making contributions, all in our own way, to make Ontario such a great place to live. We share an entrepreneurial spirit that has seen newcomers continue to help to grow our province.

Diwali, like so many festivals we celebrate here in Ontario, means a chance to spend time together with family and friends and to learn each other's cultural diversity. It is an opportunity for all Ontario to join together to celebrate and to say Diwali Mubarak.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let me first start by extending to our South Asian citizens and neighbours greetings and best wishes for a happy and prosperous future from Ontario's New Democrats, as we celebrate the arrival of Diwali.

Diwali is a significant celebration for Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains, as well as being a national holiday in India. In fact, I understand that where you live in India determines how you pronounce the very term, as "Divali" or "Diwali." This holiday is renowned for its beautiful celebrations of light and colour, which symbolize the inner strength that each of us possesses, as well as expressing the need for each of us to light the path for a better future.

Diwali calls on us to vanquish ignorance and to drive away darkness, not only in our own lives but in the wider world as well: a laudable goal, particularly in this place, I would say. This is a message that holds meaning and truth for all Ontarians and it serves to underscore how lucky we are here in Ontario. The celebration of Diwali is one of the many gifts that have been brought to Ontario society and which have made our province a richer and more diverse place.

Ontarians everywhere can and do share in the joy and hope for the future that is expressed by everyone who celebrates Diwali. We pride ourselves in our multiculturalism, our inclusiveness and our openness. Ontarians, whatever their background or heritage, can benefit from paying heed to the message of Diwali and opening our hearts and minds to each other. We have not made it there yet, unfortunately, but I believe that we are building a province and a country where belief, language, race and colour are not barriers to understanding, but rather reasons to celebrate each other and a means to find strength and unity among our shared diversity.

On behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, therefore, I wish to indicate to all, all of the people who celebrate Diwali and all Ontarians, Shubh Diwali. Have a very happy Diwali, and may peace, prosperity and happiness light your future and light your path forevermore.

1530

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have three to read today, and I had them all approved, Mr. Speaker. You'll be happy to know that they've been approved by the table. This one is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I've signed this.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm tabling this petition, which was submitted by two of my constituents, June and Nick Kaethler.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communication skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment."

I endorse this petition and send it to the table via page Kimberly.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical laboratory services in Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale and reduce line-ups throughout Simcoe-Grey:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories" in Ontario.

I will sign this petition and endorse it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that is signed by Ontarians from St. Catharines up to Callander over to Kingston and many places in between. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a

mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Last Thursday, when Bill 83 was debated in this Legislature, we had a group of people in the audience from People First Tillsonburg, who I neglected to introduce. They also gave me this petition. I want to read the petition into the record on behalf of Chair Mike Cerna.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

This is signed by a group of people who were present here on Thursday afternoon when the bill was debated. On their behalf, I present this petition.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas in the present economic climate the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan

members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I've signed my name, and I will give it to page Priscile.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to support a petition that has come from my riding.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I'm pleased to support this petition.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I want to thank Karen Seto from Westridge Boulevard in Peterborough. I know her family very well. It's a hard-working family. They've provided a petition to me that reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

1540

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this and give it to page Elle.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition here submitted by a number of constituents in Newmarket and Aurora and throughout York region. It reads as follows:

"Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and give the petition to page Emmett to present to the table.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I have a petition from Port Hope, Picton, Lindsay, Norfolk, Wainfleet, Welland, Lowbanks, and many other communities. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1889, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would

have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

In support, I add my signature to this petition and give it to Soumiya.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I've signed this.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition entitled "Haldimand-Norfolk Needs an OSPCA Chapter":

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

"Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect."

I hereby affix my signature to the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, when Bill 120 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Wednesday, November 17, 2010, and Wednesday, November 24, 2010, from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings and on Wednesday, December 1, 2010, from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 p.m. on Tuesday, November 30, 2010. On Wednesday, December 1, 2010, at no later than 1:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in suc-

cession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, December 2, 2010. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 31. Debate? Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm sharing my time with the member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure to join in this debate on Bill 120 this afternoon. I believe I'll be sharing my time with the member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

I thought what I would do today is explain that Bill 120 is part of a larger comprehensive package. The plan is to strengthen the retirement income system for the people of Ontario. I thought I'd talk about some background information, about the expert commission, about Bill 120 and the details and how it complements the whole Canada pension plan and where the Ontario government is in terms of CPP. Then, if I have time, I'll talk about modernizing the funding rules.

Ontario is in the midst of a multi-phase reform of Ontario's Pension Benefits Act, to modernize and strengthen regulation of workplace plans in Ontario. The Ontario government is committed to also strengthening the national retirement income system.

Just an interesting highlight: Over 60% of paid Ontarians do not have a workplace pension. In the private sector, the proportion of paid workers who are without a workplace pension is over 80%. So the McGuinty government has proposed a broad package of reforms, of course, to further strengthen Ontario's pension system and address the concerns of workers, the concerns of retirees and, of course, the concerns of employers as well.

1550

In 2006, the government established an Expert Commission on Pensions. The purpose of that expert commission was to conduct an independent review of the Pension Benefits Act and the Regulations Act as they pertain to the funding of the defined benefit pension plan and related issues. Of course, as we know, the commission was led by Harry Arthurs, who is a labour law expert and former president of York University.

The title of the report was *A Fine Balance: Safe Pensions, Affordable Plans, Fair Rules*. In that report, there were 142 recommendations that the committee made. As a result, the Minister of Finance invited stakeholders to provide focused comments on the report that was released in November 2008.

This act, the *Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010*, is part of a series of steps in pension reform in Ontario and it builds on the first step, Bill 236, which was passed unanimously in this House. This act, Bill 120, is the next step in pension reform in the province of Ontario.

Prior to Bill 236 passing unanimously in the House, it's interesting to note that the pension rules as they were in the province of Ontario remained largely unchanged for over 20 years. This second stage, Bill 120, of the pension reform addresses 40 recommendations, which in total is over two thirds of the recommendations that were made in the Arthurs report.

What Bill 120 would do, if passed, is strengthen Ontario's pension funding rules. It would do this by requiring more sustainable funding of promised benefits and stronger funding standards for benefit improvement. If passed, Bill 120 would also provide a framework to permit more flexible funding rules for certain multi-employer pension plans and for jointly sponsored pension plans.

It would clarify pension surplus rules and provide a dispute resolution process to allow members, retirees and sponsors to reach agreements on how surplus should be allocated on windup.

It would provide a more sustainable pension benefits guarantee fund by implementing a strategy to build reserves, to increase revenues, limit current exposure and reduce risk to taxpayers in the future.

Finally, it would further strengthen regulatory oversight and improve plan administration.

I thought it would be important to talk about the three pillars that make up our pension system. I think it's interesting to note and it's certainly important that we understand these three pillars, and as well that the people of Ontario understand those, because it is so crucial to us.

I remember—my goodness, I think I was in my first year of working. A gentleman who was an older fellow and had retired, and was a friend of the family—I remember him incessantly saying, over and over again, “If you ever have a pension, you must focus on your pension. A pension is so important.” He went into all the details of his pension and I thought at the time, “Oh my goodness, what is he talking about?”

But as you start to pay attention to the pension system and you realize its significance and how it affects the lives of the people of Ontario and ultimately, down the road, their retirement, it is so important to understand.

There are three pillars in the overview of the pension system. The first pillar is the publicly funded income security programs for seniors. That first pillar includes old age security, or OAS, and guaranteed income supplement, or GIS. These are intended to provide an income floor for seniors.

The second pillar is the Canada pension plan. We call it the Canada-Quebec pension plan, the CPP, or QPP in Quebec. These are mandatory pension programs for the employed and the self-employed and are intended to replace 25% of career average pensionable earnings. These programs are funded by employer and employee contributions and investment earnings. CPP is administered by the federal government.

The third pillar, of course, is tax-assisted voluntary private savings: private sources of tax-assisted retirement savings, including employment pension plans and RRSPs.

I wanted to refer to an article in the *Toronto Star*. It's written by Richard Brennan. He quotes the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Dwight Duncan. He says, “Retired Canadian women aren't getting their fair share of federal pension benefits compared to men....”

“[Minister] Duncan told reporters following a speech to the Canadian Labour Congress that's just another reason the entire system of retirement benefits needs to be overhauled with an eye to phased-in ‘modest’ benefits increases.

“‘Women aren't collecting CPP the way men do. There tends to be greater challenges to women getting the maximum,’ Duncan said, noting that the maximum benefit under Canada pension plan is \$11,000 a year while the average is \$6,000....”

“‘I have always felt this is going to be a long process,’ Duncan said. ‘We have to look at moving toward a better integrated national pension system, both private pensions as well as the public pensions.’”

In that same speech to the Canadian Labour Congress, later, the minister made some really crucial points to this whole debate on pensions and Bill 120. He said, “Our plan to lower corporate taxes also provides us with the room to ask the business community to do more in areas of high priority (for both labour and our government, whether it is investments in workers, premiums for workplace safety, or, perhaps) most importantly, down payments in our collective retirement security through an enhanced Canada pension plan.”

Minister Duncan goes on to say that the government has “become increasingly concerned, especially since the global economic downturn, that many Canadians are not saving adequately for retirement. Recent research, policy work and public consultations have confirmed that although our retirement income system has many strengths, a significant minority of Canadians in the future are

likely to experience a material decrease in their standard of living upon retirement unless changes are made.”

The McGuinty government is committed to making these changes. Bill 120 is the second step in a package of pension reforms that looks towards improving the pension system in Ontario. “And while governments cannot replace investment losses or guarantee future returns, we do have the tools to make saving and planning for retirement easier, more affordable, and more secure,” for the people of Ontario.

I’m going to wrap up to give my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence some time.

“That is why the Ontario government has been calling for a balanced approach to retirement income reform which would include a phased-in, fully funded, modest increase to the CPP, as well as measures to encourage pension innovation and to ensure more Canadians have adequate savings.”

There was an interesting recent report that I’d like to highlight as well: “In his recent report prepared for the Ontario government, pension expert Bob Baldwin stated that ‘the status quo is an option. However, it is an option that may leave a significant minority of people ... facing a decline in their standard of living in retirement...’”

Of course, the McGuinty government is committed to increasing that standard of living. Bill 120 is part of a comprehensive plan to strengthen the retirement income system for all Ontarians, and I highly and strongly encourage the members of this Legislature to support Bill 120.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

1600

Mr. Norm Miller: It’s my pleasure to have an opportunity to debate this time allocation motion that’s before us this afternoon, although I must admit I’m a little perplexed as to why the government feels it’s necessary to put forward a time allocation motion on Bill 120.

Just for those folks out there who don’t know what that means, it means that, through this time allocation motion, the government is being quite prescriptive in the road that Bill 120 will follow through the rest of its legislative journey. As was read out by the House leader, there would be, I think, two days of public hearings: Wednesday, November 17, and Wednesday, November 24, from just 12:30 to 3 o’clock. That’s a pretty tight time frame. Also, clause-by-clause would be on Wednesday, December 1, from just 12:30 to 3 again. It’s a pretty tight time period. Then the bill would be reported back to the House no later than December 2, a fairly tight, inscribed time frame for the route that this bill will take for the rest of its path through the Legislature. It also talks about third reading: There will be only one hour of debate for third reading, as well, on the bill.

Here’s the reason I ask, “Why do they have a time allocation motion?” I know that our party, the opposition, spoke to the bill. I spoke pretty much for an hour to the substance of the bill, as did some of our other members.

They spoke to it. We’re supporting the bill, which is framework legislation.

Normally, what you would do then is pass second reading, refer it to a committee and let the subcommittee of whatever committee it’s referred to figure out when the appropriate public hearings would be and where they should be located. Then the committee would go about its work, and then it would come back for as much debate time as necessary for third reading.

When there is agreement, there seems to be no need for debate of a time allocation motion, which we will now spend a good part of the afternoon talking about instead of the actual substance of the bill.

As I pointed out in my comments to the bill, Bill 120 is largely framework legislation. Most of the details will be in regulations, so the regulations are the critical thing that I’m sure those who will be affected by it—mainly defined benefit pension plans—would want to see in detail and have time to be able to make comment on. In fact, if anything, there should be public hearings on the regulations once they are in place. The bill, of course, has to go through first, second and third reading, be passed and receive royal assent before the regulations would be written.

We’re still waiting for the regulations on the first pension bill, Bill 236, to come into effect. In fact, I know there are some people who are affected by that bill—the split pension folks, the MPAC workers, the paramedics—who are anxiously waiting for the government to get the regulations done on Bill 236.

I’m just not sure why the government feels that they need to time-allocate this bill this afternoon.

I note that the government just sent out a glossy publication, *Securing Our Retirement Future: Consulting with Ontarians on Canada’s Retirement Income System*. It seems to me that they want comment back by November 24. They’re talking about the three pillars of retirement income, as did the parliamentary assistant, being old age security and the guaranteed income supplement, the Canada pension plan, and registered pension accounts; that’s tax-assisted voluntary private savings.

I would say that third pillar is the one that we absolutely need to worry about. The majority of the provinces, the federal government and Ontario have supported the modest increase in the Canada pension plan, although there was a motion that we spent a morning debating here in the Legislature which I amended to take into account the economic realities of the current time as well.

But in this publication they bring up some reasonable topics. I would say it’s good to be talking about retirement income, because there are lots of people who just don’t think about it till it’s maybe too late, till they get near retirement age. The key, especially for the third pillar, with your RRSP savings, your own individual savings, is that the longer you save, the better. If you start in your 20s and you save for 30 or 40 years and put even a small amount aside, that will grow to be a fairly significant amount of money over a long period of time.

I agree that we need to do a much better job in Ontario of financial literacy, so I'm pleased to see that the Ministry of Education is working on plans to integrate financial literacy into the Ontario school curriculum. I've had constituents in the business who have been saying that that really needs to happen when they see the situations people get themselves into—when you see articles, like in the *Globe and Mail*, about “Canada's Brewing Debt Storm” and how, for every \$1 of disposable income, Canadians owe a record \$1.47. It goes on to say:

“Canadian borrowers are fast approaching a day of reckoning....

“Household debt has surged three times faster than income in recent years and now stands at a record high of more than \$1 trillion. Put another way, Canadians owe about \$1.47 for every dollar of disposable income. Even more remarkably, they took on more debt during the slump—a first for a recession—because borrowing was so cheap.”

Obviously, there's a great need for financial literacy. But it seems to me that this consultation process that the government is going through is more about busy-work, talking about a lot of things that are really outside of the purview of the Ontario government, especially changes to the Canada pension plan. The federal government has already said they want to have some modest and gradual increases to that Canada pension plan.

As the parliamentary assistant noted in one newspaper article, I think she said that there was a significant minority of middle-income earners who, at retirement, are facing a significant decline in their income levels. Those at the lower level of income, on retiring, do not do too badly in terms of a change of income level, but it's those middle-income earners who face, in many cases, a situation where they face a fairly significant drop in retirement income.

We have a time allocation motion before us. It's going to be debated for a couple of hours. It's very prescriptive on what happens to the bill going forward. It only allows for two days—a few hours, in fact—of public hearings, and just in Toronto. I note that there are many other places around the province that are concerned about retirement income. In the Ottawa area, you have a lot of Nortel workers who have been greatly affected by this situation with Nortel, the bankruptcy of the company, the orphaning and wrapping up of their pension plan.

I'm going to move an amendment to the time allocation motion. At this time, I'll read it, because I do believe that public hearings should occur not just here in Toronto but in other locations around the province. I will amend the motion, adding, to the start of the second paragraph, “That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet Monday, November 8, Tuesday, November 9, and Wednesday, November 10, for the purpose of holding public hearings in London, Ottawa and North Bay.”

If I could get a page to deliver it to the Speaker at this time, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has moved an amendment, “That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet Monday, November 8, Tuesday, November 9, and Wednesday, November 10, for the purpose of holding public hearings in London, Ottawa and North Bay.” You may continue.

Mr. Norm Miller: I've spoken for an hour to the bill already. I'd say that we really need public hearings on the regulation part of it. This time allocation motion is unnecessary in that the opposition is supporting the bill. We just want some reasonable public hearings on the bill. It's a technical bill. There will be those involved in the industry who will want to have their say. We want the process to continue as it should so that we get the public input and make amendments if necessary, depending on the input we get, and send the bill back to the Legislature for third reading, modified by the committee, not compacting and shortening the process unnecessarily.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Like the member before me, I'm surprised that there's a time allocation motion before us today. I didn't think that there was a particular need to clamp down on debate on an issue that is of increasing importance here in Ontario.

If this was a bill that was ringing out headlines across the province and people were in front of the Legislature going wild, and for some reason the government felt that it had to be disposed of, well, maybe I would understand their logic, but quite honestly, I can't see any logic in this at all. Everyone in the House has been debating this bill. The people of Ontario expect us to thoroughly and soberly go through the issues before us and in fact ensure that we come forward with a proposal, a set of amendments to this bill that will make it more effective than it is. Like my colleague, I find it extraordinarily puzzling that the government has decided to do this.

On the substance of the bill itself, I note that Mr. Arthurs, Harry Arthurs, came up with a number of good suggestions regarding strengthening our existing pension system. Unfortunately, a number of the most important recommendations that he made when he was asked to look at our pension system and the sorts of changes that would have to be brought about were actually not incorporated into the legislation. There are three that absolutely should have been part of the package of this legislation before us.

First, at only \$1,000, the level of monthly pension benefits eligible for protection by the pension benefits guarantee fund is completely inadequate. I talk to pensioners in my riding every day, and those pensioners find that they are hard-pressed. They find it difficult to cover their bills—no surprise to you, Madam Speaker, they find the HST an unwelcome further burden in their lives.

When we look at what people have contributed to these pension funds, when we think of the demands that will be made on their lives in their senior years, the idea that only \$1,000 per month would actually be guaranteed is not adequate; it is completely inadequate. We believe that over time, the monthly guarantee covered by the pension benefits guarantee fund should be increased to a maximum of \$2,500 per month—still not a princely sum, but given the prices that people have to deal with, given the demands for health care that one experiences as one gets older, as one retires, given the difficulties that people face, a maximum of \$2,500 per month is an entirely reasonable amount. That's something that Mr. Arthurs recommended, something that he felt—he calculated—and he said was needed to reflect the effect of inflation on the original maximum of \$1,000, which has been in place since 1980. That's 30 years ago—30 years without an adjustment for the impact of inflation—and \$1,000 a month was of far greater consequence 30 years ago than it is today.

Not adjusting the maximum for inflation over those 30 years is a disservice to those who are depending on those pensions. It is a sign of disrespect for those who are trying to survive on a pension. It is an abandonment of the responsibility of government if it does not put in place the guarantees that are necessary to ensure that people can live with dignity, respect and a modicum of comfort when they retire.

We in the NDP agree that the basis on which the levy would be paid by plan sponsors is a complex matter. It would take a lot of discussion, analysis and consultation. There would have to be a phase-in period; no question. There are many forces and issues that would have to be sorted through and reconciled.

All that being said, we are very disappointed that this key recommendation from Mr. Arthurs is nowhere to be seen in this first package of pension reform legislation. That piece alone is something that this government should have addressed. A lot of other issues are on the table, but that one alone is key. When I talk to pensioners, when I go door to door in my riding, this question of inadequate income comes up time after time after time. When I look at emails that I receive from former Nortel employees trying to live on their pensions, people who face extreme hardship, people who worked for decades for a company and now find that what were essentially deferred wages are evaporating in front of them—that's not just. That's not proper. That is not the way we should be dealing with the people in this society who allow it to run.

This government likes to talk about the fact that just to allow for solvency under the present \$1,000-per-month limit, the premium had to be raised by 500%. What isn't made clear by the government is that that 500%, in real terms, is an increase from \$1 per plan member per year to \$5 per plan member per year—\$5 per year.

People know that if you are buying insurance, if you are buying a pension, if you are buying a framework to keep your pension going, it isn't going to be free. An

increase of \$5 per year to ensure that the \$1,000-per-month guarantee is in place, solid and sustainable is entirely defensible.

The minister also says that to implement the full Arthurs recommendation of \$2,500 per year would mean a 1,000% increase. That would mean \$10 per member per year. If that was phased in, we think that that would be a reasonable commitment to make, to make sure that people had a pension guarantee of up to \$2,500 per month. If the way to prevent future Nortel disasters is to phase in an increase of \$5 per year per member over the new rates, then the government should just do it. No one in the future in Ontario should go through what the Nortel pensioners have gone through and are going through. They don't deserve to be treated the way they've been treated, and other pensioners don't deserve to be treated in that fashion.

Secondly, the NDP supports the Arthurs recommendation for establishing an Ontario pension agency. We believe that pooling, administering, investing and disbursing stranded pensions would be an important role for the agency. In our opinion, an Ontario pension agency would pretty much solve the problem that Nortel pensioners face. Nortel, AbitibiBowater, CanWest Global Communications: All could benefit from an Ontario pension agency.

The government seems to think that the pension agency, as conceived of by Arthurs, runs the risk of making the government responsible for any downside potential involved in managing pension assets. That's simply not the case. And if that's not the case, you have to wonder why the government won't pursue this very solid idea.

1620

Finally, Arthurs recommended the adoption of emergency indexation provisions. In the event of another surge in inflation, fixed pension benefits will, we know, be inadequate. At the same time, inflation may deliver high nominal returns to pension funds. High nominal returns due to inflation should not be permitted to produce high surpluses at the expense of fixed-income pensioners.

Now—right now—is the time to address this concern with limited indexing provisions, before inflation becomes a serious issue. We very much think the government needs to act on this.

To give the government credit—and as you're well aware, I don't do that often—there are a number of solid provisions in this legislation. Most of the constructive proposals follow closely the recommendations of Professor Arthurs, and to him should go most of the credit. It's too bad that by ignoring three of his most important recommendations, the government threw away the opportunity to pass some really landmark pension legislation.

I want to talk about some of the specific provisions in the legislation. This is very technical stuff, and I look forward to going clause by clause—or my colleague, to be more accurate, Mr. Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney

Creek, looks forward to going clause by clause through the bill at committee.

Here are some of the NDP's thoughts about this bill and the clauses in it. In terms of funding, in broad strokes, we think the government is on the right track because they're basically following the Arthurs recommendations. We're pleased to see that Ontario's legislation will in the future treat different types of pension plans differently in regard to funding.

In general, pension plans that are jointly sponsored and governed by a board that is independent of the employer, at least half of whose members are appointed by a trade union, will be treated differently than pension plans that are sponsored and governed only by an employer. We applaud this step, and we believe that it marks an important transition to a more stable employment-based pension system. At the same time, we do have specific concerns in regard to the proposed funding rules of general application as well as those that are applicable specifically to multi-employer plans.

Plan improvements: With respect to the section on plan improvements, we note that the government proposes to limit the ability to improve plan benefits by requiring that any more improvements, or any improvements, be funded more quickly than is now the case. In particular, the government proposes eight-year, going-concern funding for benefit improvements in the normal course, and, where a plan's funded ratio is 85% or less, an immediate lump sum payment followed by a five-year amortization period. While these rules have merit in cases where the cost of improvement is large in comparison to the underlying sponsor's payroll or financial capacity, these rules are unnecessary in other cases and may indeed unduly restrict the ability of a plan to provide decent pension benefits to its members.

There are other members of my caucus who will be addressing this matter today. Mr. Miller is here from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. Mr. Peter Kormos will be speaking to this bill as well. I will be leaving my remaining time to them to address the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in my remarks—although this is about time allocation, I think it's another opportunity to talk about this very crucial issue, and that is pension reform. As you know, in the next 20 years the number of people over age 65 in Ontario will double. I don't know if you heard that, Madam Speaker—double. Can you believe that? The number of people over 65 will double. You can imagine the impact that's going to have on pensions and the demand for seniors' services and supplemental income for our seniors, so we are really reaching the crunch time for our pension future, you might say. I think that's why this bill that's been put forward by Minister Duncan and his efforts to engage the federal government in these discussions about the pension future are crucial. It's never really been done before. I know we have dealt with pensions on an ad hoc basis here when there's been a serious crisis, as there has been with a

couple of defined benefit pension plans when they've gotten into trouble. But I think it's the first time there's been a comprehensive approach to the future of pensions and where our citizens' futures are in jeopardy.

As you know, over 70% of Ontarians do not have a defined benefit pension plan—70%. Many of them are women who, basically, have only that old age security to live on. Many of them worked on and off in the workforce—they stopped to have children and raise a family—so they have very little to show for it in their Canada pension plan.

These are the people, in all of our ridings, who are very fragile when it comes to the sustainability of their income. There's very little money coming in and a lot of money going out the door. It's especially acute for those pensioners who live in the GTA and in Toronto, because it is extremely expensive to hold on to any kind of residence in Toronto, whether it's the rent you pay in an apartment or the cost of maintaining a home in Toronto. It is extremely exorbitant at times.

You can imagine: In Toronto, all of a sudden your home could be worth \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000. You've lived in that home; it's a very modest home. It's not unusual, in the older parts of Toronto, to see a home that's got 18-foot frontage by 110 feet—a very modest home, semi-detached—that has that value. You can imagine what you have to pay in taxes, what you have to pay to maintain that home. You have to fix the roof. Every year, it's either the roof, it's the eavestroughs, it's water in the basement. It's guaranteed, if you have a home, that you're going to be putting out all kinds of money you never intended to put out to fix and maintain your home.

The seniors don't want to leave that home. They want to stay in that home, because that's where their church or their synagogue is, or that's where their friends are, and they want to stay there. In fact, the government saves money if they stay in that home. In the long run, it's much more effective to allow seniors to maintain that residence.

But you can imagine the costs of trying to hold on to that home: the heating bills and the maintenance, as I said. So when you've got a senior who's basically bringing in \$14,000 a year, it is almost impossible.

As you know, our seniors are exceptional savers. I saw it the other day. I was walking along Hopewell Avenue in my riding, and there was a senior with a pail, and she was on the curb, in the gutter, scooping up water. I said, "What are you doing with that water?" She said, "I'm trying to keep my water bill down, and I'm using that to water my flowers." This is how effective they are as savers.

They want to stay in that home. They don't consume—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the member from Grey-Owen Sound doesn't appreciate the hard-working seniors in my riding who came to Canada with nothing. These seniors came to Canada with nothing but the will to

work. They've sacrificed, they've saved, they raised a family, and they paid their taxes. But the member from Grey-Owen Sound thinks it's a joke. He thinks that these hard-working seniors are a joke. I can't believe that. He's heckling these seniors, who never spent one day on unemployment insurance, not one day on unemployment insurance, not one day on welfare.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Shame on you.

Mr. Mike Colle: They paid their taxes, they worked two or three jobs, and he says, "Shame on them," the member from Grey-Owen Sound. He says, "Shame on these seniors." I say, shame on him for not respecting these seniors, who have sacrificed.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: And that's the problem—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

You may continue.

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Mr. Mike Colle: That's the problem with the member from Grey-Owen Sound. He doesn't appreciate the sacrifices made by these seniors and how much they saved, how much they care about their kids, their homes. They want to stay in their homes, and the member from Grey-Owen Sound wants them to leave their homes. I say, let them stay in their homes. They have a right to stay in their homes, but they can't stay in their homes if they don't have an adequate pension. They don't have an adequate pension because they don't have the luxury of a defined benefit pension plan. All they've got is the old age security plan. The member from Grey-Owen Sound thinks every senior is rich or something. Many seniors in Toronto are strapped because they are paying a lot of their money to help maintain their homes.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order, order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask the member from Grey-Owen Sound—you'll have your turn shortly. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence, continue.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's about time we stood up for these seniors and reminded everybody that not everybody has the Canada pension plan. All they have is the old age security, and they live very frugally. They've worked hard. They continue to ask nothing of the government but good health care, good police protection, good city services. That's all they ask.

It's ironic that the government in Ottawa talks about everything under the sun. They talk about the long-form census, and they talk about all these obscure things. They never talk about seniors and their pensions. I've never seen one federal election where they—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Building jails.

Mr. Mike Colle: Oh, they talk about building jails, too. Build homes for seniors, not jails. That would be good.

Federal governments of all stripes in the past—you go to any federal election. I've never heard pensions discussed; never. Everything is discussed, from building

jails to banning long rifles to long forms, yet they never talk about our seniors.

As a provincial government, our main mandate is to ensure our seniors have good health care in their declining years. That's why we need to be there for them, whether it's hip replacements, knee replacements, cataracts, long-term-care facilities. We've got the aging-at-home strategy. I think we are trying to do our part.

And it's not a laughing matter, Madam Speaker. These seniors deserve good health care, and they deserve a better pension. I think it's our job here as legislators in Ontario to be the voice of our seniors, to ensure that whether it's the federal government or whether it's the provincial Legislature—we have to speak up on behalf of seniors who have sacrificed, who have saved, who have worked hard, who have never asked the government for anything. We have to be spokespersons for those seniors who want just to stay in their home and live in peace and tranquility in their golden years.

Right now, it is very difficult to do that because the federal pension—you look at it in the last 20 years. What did it go up? One dollar, \$2 a year, something like that. It's laughable. Those pensions should be increasing in a substantial way so that seniors can stay in their homes. I'm talking about the old age pension that most seniors rely upon. That's got to be substantially increased. It can't be done by the provincial government, but we can certainly pressure and partner with the federal government to ensure that these seniors who have very modest incomes, very modest demands, who have never asked for anything from government, can stay in their homes in dignity.

It's ironic. You pick up the front page of any newspaper in Canada today and see what's in the newspaper. There's never anything about helping seniors and their pensions. It's never in there. Every other group, every other special interest group, every other person who has a loud mouth gets all kinds of money from the government in Ottawa. They never talk about helping seniors in a substantial way. It's about time that happened. It's good for the government in Ottawa to talk about all of these incredible programs they have, but when are they going to have good programs that help seniors and pensioners stay in their homes?

I know there is one program that's being discussed. That is a program that will help people who are relatives or friends of seniors who are sick and elderly, and that person might be able to get some kind of supplement to help care for that person at home. I know it's a program that is used in Italy. It's called accompaniment. It's a very good program. It's being looked at.

That's the kind of substantive investment that has to be made in keeping our seniors safe and healthy in their homes. That's what we should be doing as provincial legislators. We should be looking at ways of modernizing, making these pension plans viable, because they're not, in many cases. Whether they're the company pensions or the old-age security, we've got to be much more articulate on behalf of our seniors, because right

now, they are feeling the pinch. As I said, it's not even on the radar. I mean, if you turn on the parliamentary channel in Ottawa, when are they ever talking about seniors and their pensions? Never. They've walked away from the health care debate. Who is the Minister of Health in the federal government in Ottawa? I have no idea. At one time, the federal government in Ottawa played a role in health care. They play no role, hardly, in health care right now.

We can't help people and their pension dilemma by ourselves, and that's why I'm glad that Minister Duncan has taken this issue to Ottawa. All the provincial Premiers should do this, because this is a huge point of stress, of future indemnity for all of us. Unless there's a concerted effort to put this on the agenda, to ensure that the best advice is given, from people like Professor Arthurs, and to ensure that this goes forward in a meaningful, substantive way—and I know that sometimes people say, "Well, you should do this, that or the other thing." It's never been done in a meaningful way. There's never been any pension debate. You look at the Hansard of the provincial Legislature for the last 30 years: hardly any debate on pension reform. Its time has come, and the clock is ticking.

As I said, the number of people over 65 in the next 20 years will double in Ontario. We've seen the lack of concern that some of these corporate giants have had about their pensioners. We have seen them left out in the cold, because it's always about some corporate shareholder's perspective rather than the perspective of the workers. There needs to be more protection for workers, more protection for them when they retire to ensure that pension is there, because they paid into it.

These protections are very vulnerable right now, because as you know, in the United States and in Canada, the pension plans were quite buoyant and quite liquid because of the markets. As we know, the markets in New York and on Wall Street were essentially a balloon full of a lot of hot air. They were just speculative values that didn't really have true values. So who has suffered with the speculation and the speculators on Wall Street? Ultimately, it's the pensioners. In fact, in Canada, luckily, the other base for seniors' equity in their declining years is their home. Thankfully, our home values have remained constant. But you can imagine, in the United States of America, where they've had the double whammy. Now you can buy a home in many jurisdictions in the United States for \$40,000, \$50,000. Homes in Detroit that used to cost \$500,000 are going for \$5,000. So they lose their home and the value of their home. Then on top of that, any money they had—and as you know, Americans were told to invest in Wall Street, and that was their future. I think they call it a "K." I was going to say Y2K, but they—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: A 401(k).

Mr. Mike Colle: A 401(k). So they invested in the stock market. The stock market collapses, real estate prices collapse, and you can see the double whammy for seniors in the United States.

In Canada, we have seen an impact of the meltdown of Wall Street, two years ago. It's really impacted many of our seniors, and if they have money in the bank, money in GICs, you can see how low that return is. And who is to say what's going to happen to the bubble in the real estate market? As was reported by the Conference Board of Canada, I think, last week, Canadian homes are overvalued by about 20%, 30%. That, for many seniors, is their pension. That's what they have. All they have is that home that they paid off the mortgage on and kept up to date. That was their hope for the future: that they could live their last remaining years with a little bit of security.

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This bill and the issue of where it's going is critically important, and I'm glad that it is before us in the Ontario Legislature. I think we all need to come with a real focus on trying to remember that there are many people unable to fend for themselves financially, and we owe it to them to be their advocates. We should be their advocates here, provincially, and we should be their advocates with the federal government, which is basically missing in action. I don't say that it's just the present federal government, which is Conservative; it's the same thing with the last federal Liberal government. The pension issue was never on the table, never discussed in any election. Can you recall one election where this was an issue? Never. It has never been a federal issue. It's shameful that it has never been discussed as a federal issue when so many seniors have fought for this country and sacrificed to make this a great country.

Let's go forward with this legislation and drive this issue for fairness, especially for our seniors, who need that pension, and for those workers who are retired who need the security of a pension they were promised.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm a little confused today. I thought we were here debating closure on a pension act, and what we've had for the last 20 minutes was a lecture on how bad Ottawa is and how bad it is to live in Ontario under the Liberal government. I can't believe this gentleman across the way, who said it's so bad in Ontario, and he's the government. They've been here seven years and did nothing about it, and now all of a sudden he's blaming it all on Ottawa. But I guess that's what the Liberals want to do.

Here we are bringing a closure motion to a bill that I believe the opposition is in favour of—at least we are, anyway, on this side—and we've got to spend a whole day here debating closing the bill. That doesn't make a lot of sense. What has this government come to? They have nothing, I guess, to bring forward to this House other than closure on a bill that people agree with, and then they get up and lecture us about Ottawa. That shows that this government over here has come to their last days. They are desperate to hang on to power, which won't be here much longer, and they bring in a closure motion to a bill that people agree on. Boy, they must be desperate over there to show their power. Does this give

you power, that, "We can close a bill whenever we want"? All they had to do was bring it back for third reading and it would have gotten passed. But no; they want to put on a whole lot of regulations, rules, and say, "We're going to close the bill and have very little debate on it in third reading."

I want to remind them that we have an amendment to their bill: "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet Monday, November 8, Tuesday, November 9, and Wednesday, November 10, for the purpose of holding public hearings in London, Ottawa and North Bay."

If they're really serious about what they say and they want this bill passed and they want to listen to people—and the gentleman who spoke just before me went on and on about how nobody's doing anything—here's a chance. I'm sure he'll be voting for this amendment. I don't see how he couldn't vote for it after the lecture he gave us in this House about how no one is doing anything for seniors. Here's a chance to go out and hear from other people. Hopefully he'll accept the amendment when it comes time to vote tonight. I'm sure he will; I don't know how he couldn't. There's a name for that, but we won't be able to say it in here. I'm sure he will certainly vote for it, because we're going to have the chance to do that later on this afternoon.

Why couldn't we, instead of having a closure motion to close Bill 120 when everybody is in favour of it—there may be changes to it, but we're willing to grant passage of it—be working on one of the petitions that I brought into this House today? They're doing nothing about people who picket in front of our vulnerable people. We've had people here at the Legislature talking about that. We have a bill, Bill 83, that would prohibit people picketing vulnerable people's residences during a strike, which is terrible. There's nothing wrong if people want to go on strike—and they have the right to do that—but when you get into Community Living and places like that, to go right to the residence and picket there is despicable, and it shouldn't happen.

But this government obviously thinks it's better to bring in a closure bill than do something like that, bring in something that we could actually have meaningful debate on. They'd rather have us come in here and listen to somebody bash the federal government. That is almost pathetic, when somebody stands up here and uses up his time to bash something in Ottawa, which he has no control over anyway, and to say that nobody is doing anything about it. But his own government hasn't done anything about it. And now they have a bill that we want to pass, and they want to drag it out; they want to bring in a whole day of debate. We could be debating third reading right now and getting this bill passed, but no, they want to sit in here and bash the federal government.

There's another petition that I read in today. It's about what we had happen in the OSPCA. They don't want to touch that. I think what happened—the minister said that they had no provincial jurisdiction over the OSPCA. If that's true, then why aren't you doing something about

it? Because you all saw what happened when they got out of control. It says here that they killed over 90 animals—99 animals have been killed. This government says we can't do anything about it, yet we're going to bring in a motion that we're going to talk about all day to bring in closure on a bill that people support.

Where's the sense in that? What has this government come to? We're sitting down here at Queen's Park debating a closure bill when you could be debating something like this, something that could do some good, something that people want done out there. We've already agreed with this bill. We've heard from the member over there that it's a federal fault anyway, and we've agreed on this one to try to help out with the seniors, and yet he goes on and on and his government brings in this closure bill, which we shouldn't be standing here debating. If anything, this should be third reading debate.

The minister from Manitoulin Island—I'm surprised he's here and he's not out hunting, but he is here, and he likes to get in on the conversation, which is fine, if he would like to stand up and have a few words in here. But there's no sense in your heckling because nobody listens to you when you heckle. You might as well get that through your head. And he's been here long enough to know that it doesn't do him any good to heckle, because all he does is get somebody else riled up.

Again, here we're debating, as I say, a closure motion, which is very odd. I mean, we have no idea, and I'm sure he has no idea, why it's brought in, or any of the rest of them over there. They have to come in, do their duty, and we're glad to see them here doing their duty.

But now we have a nice new glossy book put out by the government, the Minister of Finance; it's even got your three-men-in-a-tub logo on here. My good friend from Welland coined the name for that. Remember? The member from Welland is here.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Three men in a tub. It has "Ontario" on it. It's one of these nice glossy books. And I can remember—I've been here for a few years—when they were in opposition, standing up if we ever dared print something like this—"Huh?" They went on and on about all the money you spent.

Interjection: What's inside? Is there anything worth—

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Well, we're going to get into the inside. We're going to do a bit of Masonic work on this, because I see they're into the three pillars. Some people would be interested in this, and in their version, two of the pillars are from Ottawa. Why would they print something in here from Ottawa—who knows?—after the thrashing they just did on Ottawa? And then to come in and complain about Ottawa and put them right on the book, because they have pillars one, two and three. Pillars one and two are in Ottawa, and three is here. But I always thought pillars were something different. I remember pillars. There's wisdom, strength and beauty.

Interjection: Beauty.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Right. Somebody will understand that. Some people out in the world will understand that.

The trouble is they couldn't put that down—wisdom, strength and beauty—because there's not a lot of wisdom over there, coming in with this bill; strength—well, they try to have strength in numbers, but their numbers dwindle away, they dwindle away, and we can't say too much about that; beauty—well, I hate to say too much. Some of them come up pretty good on that one, but we can't even get into names, so what can I do with that?

But these temples look like they're from King Solomon, and I know some of you will understand that. What do we call them? Ionic, Doric and what was that third one?

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Mr. Robert Bailey: Corinthian.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Corinthian. You would have made more sense, folks, in doing something like that, some Masonic work in this book, than in sending this out, trying to tell people that this is going to get you votes and putting the three men in the tub on the front of it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Show us the handshake.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: They could have. They would have been better off, member from Welland. The member from Hamilton, he understands this whole thing. This is just sort of another one of their silly things that they come out with. But if they'd like some wisdom, I could give it to them, and some strength. The beauty may not be here, but I can't help that one. But we can help them out, and I'm sure we can help them out with King Solomon's temple, because they must have thought that would have caught somebody's eye. That's all I can see.

Mr. Toby Barrett: There's a reason.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: There must be a reason but we can't find it because most of it's about federal stuff. CPP: Is that not federal? Old age security: Is that not federal?

Then we get into the tax-assessed voluntary private savings. I like that word because they really love it over there—"tax." That's their middle name. Liberal tax, or maybe it's tax Liberal, I'm not sure, but they love that word, don't they, over there?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Tax and spend.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Tax and spend—and they proved that—

Mr. Paul Miller: Or crash and burn.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: "Crash and burn," somebody says, and that could be it.

But maybe we could have talked about, rather than this bill that we're talking about, this resolution to close off closure on this one—maybe we could talk about the \$20 billion they spent that they didn't have. Twenty billion dollars you spent last year that you didn't have. Did any of it go to help the seniors? We heard the speaker before me—no, because they're in bad shape and it's because the Liberals have been in government for seven years. I've never heard a more scathing comment on this government than the one I heard from the Liberal member.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Their own member.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Their own member. But he's catching on. He says, "You know, there's an election coming and I'm going to need some votes out there; I'd better start cutting my own government up pretty soon," and he went on to do that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It will only get worse.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Well, anything else can't get worse because here we are today, all these important issues that we have in Ontario, and one of them is seniors. That is so important. We're debating a resolution to bring in a motion to bring down a bill, but we could be debating that bill; we could have it over today. The bill could be done. We could have talked about third reading and got it on, but no, we're not doing that and we're not going to listen to anybody. We're going to have two days—I believe it's two days, if I'm right—of hearings in Toronto.

We have an amendment, and I know the good people over there will listen to that amendment and they will vote for it, so this should pass today as amended, I would hope.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: What? There's the racetrack man telling me, "No way." He's been run over a few times by some of those cars, I'm sure, obviously, but there he is telling me, "No way." He's telling me, "No way."

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: And then Etobicoke starts getting into the argument over there. That's nice to hear, that they're listening somewhere along the line, but why don't you go to your caucus meeting and bring it up and say, "Why are we doing stupid things like this, folks? Why are we doing this?" Do you speak up in caucus? You like to talk here when it's not your turn, which is fine. I don't mind a bit of heckling over there, that's fine. But do you speak up when it comes to caucus? Have you not gone and told them that these are silly things to do? I can't believe it.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: And there he is, Mr. Race Car himself. Does he say anything in caucus? I don't know, but obviously he let this get by.

Having a whole day wasted in here talking about bringing closure to a bill, just to give you power. Do you think that's power over there? But folks, you could have had this bill. You know that. The opposition was agreeing with you on this. Let's get it through and get on to the regulations. That's where there will be trouble anyway, I'm sure, but we'd like to get to those at least and get something going. But no, you've got to bring in a closure motion and waste a whole day here when you could have been doing other things.

I have to leave some time, and that's all right. I just hope the rest of them use up their time, too. I don't mind leaving time, because I know other people would like to speak on this, Madam Speaker. I'm sure that if you could get out of that chair, you'd love to get out here and talk to these people.

I'm going to leave it at that: Why are we doing dumb things like this when we could be doing something more important?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Before I get into the notes, I'd just look to bring the viewers up to snuff on what's going on here. The bottom line here is that the government will stand up and point at the opposition and say, "You didn't support this bill." There could be 50 things wrong with the bill and two things right, but we don't want to stand in the way of progress. So, as good, collective, agreeable people, we'll pass the bill even though it's completely insufficient, although it is a terrible bill and all it does is a little housekeeping. But we'll pass it because we don't want them to stand up and say, "Your party voted against it." That's what they'll do.

We get these bills that are one tenth of what they should be, and they get passed in the House because you don't want to stand in the way of any little bit of progress. This bill is far from being a good bill, and the member from the opposition stood up and said that we agree on it. No, we don't agree on it. It'll pass because we don't want to stand in the way of some of the things they implemented that aren't so bad, but 90% of it is not there.

The other member got up and said, "Let's pass it on to Ottawa and put all the financial burden on them." I'll reiterate that this government is responsible for 70% of the pension plans in this province, and they've got a hands-off approach. They blame it on Ottawa. They say that CPP will solve all the problems in Ottawa by increasing the CPP, but they're running away from their commitment provincially.

We, in the NDP, brought forward a plan that would have helped the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a plan at all, and it would be the Ontario pension plan. We brought it forward. It fell on deaf ears. They didn't deal with it. They shot it down in committee and wouldn't even entertain it because they did not want a financial commitment to the people of Ontario—the people who pay the taxes here.

Then they stood up and had the nerve to say, "Well, 65% of the people have to pay for the 30% of defined pension plans, and that's not fair; they shouldn't have to." You're right; they shouldn't. They should be able to participate in a plan themselves, called the Ontario pension plan, but you're not giving them the opportunity. They'll probably go to their grave with no defined pension plan because you won't implement the Ontario pension plan, which would help those 65% of Ontarians who need help, because, believe me, the members across the way know darn well that some people don't even qualify for CPP. All they get is old age security. That doesn't cut it. If you don't have a private pension plan or another pension plan, you're done. You're not going to stay in your house on \$700 or \$800 a month. You know that. They're going to be in a less-than-desirable location

to spend their golden years. These people know that, but they won't implement a plan for Ontario to help people.

This afternoon, we should be debating Bill 120, pension benefits, not rushing it through so people can't have their say. We should be debating it. I'm going to remind the government, from my statement last week on our position on this bill—not only our position but that of all Ontarians: The benefits that Ontarians want are those that offer security, stability and options: options like those recommended in the Expert Commission on Pensions report—and the member stood up and said, "Dr. Arthurs did a great job." He did do a good job, but they didn't listen to him. They didn't implement it. Security: like that recommended to raise the pension guarantee fund to \$2,500 a month. This plan hasn't been increased since 1980. Wake up, people. Thirty years? Do you think maybe costs went up? Do you think maybe prices went up for wherever you're living, or your utilities? One thousand a month—same as it was in 1980. They did nothing to increase the pension guarantee fund.

Security: in this government establishing an Ontario pension agency which will grow up, not wind up, pensions left without proper management when a company goes bankrupt.

Options: Every working Ontarian deserves the chance to belong to a publicly managed defined-benefit pension plan like the NDP's proposed Ontario retirement plan.

Every Ontarian could face retirement enjoying greater financial security, not begging the government to top up retirement income so that they can climb up closer to the minimum-income poverty level.

1700

This afternoon, we could stand up for everyday Ontarians—we should be properly debating this bill—but we're not. We're suffering another government time allocation motion, an action ensuring that the voices of Ontarians are stifled; that the government can bully its way around and do exactly what Ontarians don't want. I encourage each MPP to think about the positive impact they could have on their constituents—but they are not even being considered in this time allocation motion.

As a New Democrat, I'm outraged that this government is yet again shutting down debate in this Legislature. Why is this government yet again using the heavy hammer of time allocation to end debate? Why are they doing it?

The member stood up and said, "Everybody agrees on this." Well, no, we don't agree on it. We agree on maybe 20% or 15% of it, but we don't want to stand in the way of progress, so, yes, we'll probably vote for it because if we don't, the finance minister will stand up and say, "Your party voted against it," even though 80% of it is garbage. So you've got to vote for 20% and accept the 80% garbage. That's not my idea of a good bill.

Time allocation only ensures that there are as few people as possible allowed to speak at public hearings. They've limited it to two half-days in Toronto. Don't go to the pension centres, where people really know a lot

about pension windup, like Hamilton or Windsor. Where are we going to do it? In Toronto.

Why are they afraid that Ontarians will start asking questions and get to the bottom, to the real impact of this legislation, the real truth behind this bill? If it's such a good bill, let them talk about it. Let them have their day in court.

Let's be clear for those who are watching this televised debate: We're dealing with truncating, reducing, ending the time that we're going to have to debate this bill in the House. This is probably the most important thing that has happened in this province in the last 30 years—pension reform—probably the most important bill, and they want to move it quickly because they really don't want you to look at the fine points in this bill because you might find something you don't like. In fact, I guarantee you would.

The government's actions would lead one to believe that without time allocation the world is going to come to an end; that hearing from Ontarians will cause permanent damage to this bill. At best, this is quite a stretch. To suggest that somehow or other time allocation is about efficiency in the disposition of business—if we brought that argument forward to every democratic thing we do, I think we'd be in big trouble. There are sufficient rules within our Legislature to provide members an opportunity to express themselves on legislation that they have reservations about.

This time allocation is a sadly cursory way to deal with government business. To allow that to happen is a disservice to all of us, because we all, even the governing group, are diminished by it.

Rather than making time allocation motions, this government would better serve the people of Ontario by rewriting the rules so that we can divide a piece of legislation and vote on sections of it, especially the pain of omnibus bills. We never get to vote—example: a budget. The finance minister stands up there and says, "You voted against the budget." Well, here we go again. There could be 10 things in the budget that are good and 70 that are wrong. Of course we're going to vote against it. Of course we're going to vote against the things we don't like. We even have groups coming in here telling them it's wrong, whom they don't listen to. They don't listen in committee; they don't listen to all the large groups who come in here and say what they think about the legislation, and nothing happens. Municipal councils do this regularly, and good parts of legislation actually get enacted, and those without support get sent back to be rethought and rewritten. A significant advantage of this is that the public can actually see what is hidden in the bills as members ask to vote on individual sections that they agree with or want to ensure the members' votes are recorded. It is a more transparent way to do business and allows our constituents to speak to specifics and have a real say in the laws that we pass in this House.

Time allocation is not the right way to go. This only serves the government's agenda, not that of Ontarians.

To follow the lead of my learned colleagues across the floor, I've looked into their records, into how they have responded to time allocation motions when not in government. I repeat: when not in government. The Minister of Community Safety said:

"How I wish we didn't have to debate this time allocation motion...."

"I simply want to say that once again we see the government using its iron fist on the opposition...."

I agree with you, Minister. This government is using its iron fist to stop the basic right of the public to raise their concerns to ensure full, in-depth debate and consideration of their support of this legislation.

If the government really wants to hear from interested parties about this or any bill they decide to time-allocate, they should ensure that there are more days for each standing committee to meet and to hear deputations. Two half-days don't cut it. There should be at least three full days, at minimum, or more, if necessary, depending on how many applications they get.

If the governing group really wanted to hear from Ontarians, they would not use their majority on standing committees to stifle debates. I sat on a committee for a seniors' bill—and I think one member stood up here from Toronto and said how wonderful they are for seniors. We had 91 amendments to the seniors' bill that the NDP put forward. They changed half of one because it was a housekeeping thing and they shot down 90. We had amendments from CARP. We had amendments from the nursing association. We had amendments from all the seniors' associations in Ontario, even from some of the home care people and from the chain care. And what did they do? They shot down 90 of them. All the Liberal members didn't even pay attention when we presented them. They were doing other things, looking at their BlackBerrys and doing other things, not paying attention. They just went through the motions, no pun intended. They went through the motions and sat there and just shot everything down. They had their marching orders. They didn't think for themselves; they did what they were told to do. It happens day in and day out in this Legislature. I've been here three years and I've sat on these committees. It's a joke. They're a joke.

I want to be clear: Despite this time allocation motion, I'm pleased to have even a minor bit of movement on this bill—a minor bit of movement. They did a few housekeeping things on administration and windup that weren't too bad. But you can't shoot it down, because then you shoot the whole bill down, and they say, once again, "Your party shot the bill down. Your party didn't support us," even though 80% of it is wrong.

As I've said previously, the government has made some moves on administration changes, windup rule changes, and other things they've tinkered with as far as administration goes. However, I heard my colleague from the opposition say that he was concerned about the 65% of Ontarians contributing to the defined pension plan protection under the PBGF, and they don't get anything out of it. Well, I can see why they'd be upset, having to

donate to a defined pension plan system that they can't even claim. But we had an answer for that: the Ontario pension plan. They could have been part of the system. They could have donated to the system, and they would have felt good about their donations because they'd get something at the end of the day. But this government shot it down, didn't even want to deal with it, couldn't even handle it. Maybe if we didn't owe \$21 billion, we might have been able to handle it. Who did that in seven years?

I remember when I first got here that the finance minister used to stand up and berate the official opposition. He'd stand up and criticize them: "When we took over seven years ago, we had a \$5-billion deficit." Well, you've got \$21 billion now. I don't see you mentioning that anymore. Why aren't you talking about it? And why isn't the official opposition going after them and saying, "Your deficit is four times more than we had." Why don't you guys go after them? You should. Don't throw rocks when you live in a glass house. I can't believe that the finance minister can stand up and say that. It's unbelievable.

The consideration of this good plan fell on deaf ears. The ORP would have helped the 65% of Ontarians who don't have workplace pension plans so that they wouldn't feel left out of the process, and without the help that so many of them need for retirement.

We also proposed improvements to the PBGF for defined pension plans. The government's own expert, Dr. Arthurs, recommended that you raise it from \$1,000 to \$2,500. They could have done it over a period of time. We didn't expect it overnight. They could have amortized it. Not one penny—they did not increase it one penny, and they've got the nerve to stand up and say that they're helping Ontarians. They pass it off to CPP in Ottawa, where we may get a very minimal increase. They're not living up to their commitments, they're not doing the job for the people of this province, and they'll find out next year.

1710

There was an influx of some money into the pension plan, but be very sure, if a major corporation—I won't deny they put money into the PBGF; they did. But trust me, if Nortel pensioners start collecting on it, or Chrysler or somebody else goes under, within three years, your PBGF would be dead in the water. There would be nothing.

Why should people who pay into pension plans their whole life be put in a position to lose 30% or 40% of their hard-earned pension income—income they worked their whole life for, and for which they negotiated, by deferred wages, to provide retirement protection? Gone, almost all of it. Look at those poor Nortel workers and a lot of other people in this province. That was negotiated in contracts. They kept their end of the bargain. They worked all those years, hoping that they'd have something contributing to the end of the day, and then the company pulls the rug out from underneath them and says, "Sorry, we don't have the funds. We're going to have to wind up your pension plan. You're out of luck."

The person is 68 or 70 years old, or even older—80 maybe—and they're going to take two thirds or whatever away from their pension. Talk about a kick in the head. You might as well have rolled a steamroller over them. Half of them can't bounce back because they're too old to get jobs. They can't bounce back, so are they going to live in poverty for the rest of their life? Yes, I think so.

And the government—it just boggles my mind. They get up and say, "Our minister has gone to two meetings." Yeah, he's gone to two meetings to pass the buck to the feds on CPP, but he's not doing anything here in Ontario except administrative changes. Not one penny is going into the pockets of pensioners who need it now, today—not next week, not next month, not 10 years from now, but now. They need help now, and it's not happening. It's "Pass the buck to the feds."

The NDP's Ontario pension plan proposal is the only solution to this dilemma—the only solution. It will work, and we've shown them it will work. And it will cost almost nothing: \$1 to \$5 per plan member per year, five bucks a year, at the top end, per plan member to make that Ontario plan work. Wow, that's not a lot of money. You probably spend that much at Tim Hortons. Well, think about it. Let's make it 10 bucks a year, 100 bucks a year. Boy, that plan would be in good shape in 10 years. If each working Ontarian put \$100 into that plan—wow. There are plans that have great track records, but plans would happily step in to use their already-in-place systems to quickly enable the ORP to get up and running and to manage the Ontario pension plan.

Over the last year, the Minister of Finance has gotten up in this House and avoided our Ontario pension plan, avoided some of our submissions on it. He seems to want to go only with the CPP enhancements and not to take responsibility provincially. He is betting the house on CPP enhancements. He attended a meeting out west, he attended a meeting in PEI, and he will attend more meetings. What has he learned? It's hard to know and hard to quantify when we read Bill 120 and how scantily it addresses the real needs of Ontarians.

An article in the *Globe and Mail* stated, "The federal government is having a difficult time negotiating changes to the Canada pension plan with the provinces that would mean higher premiums for Canadians, but also increased benefits. Alberta, for example, is opposed to any increases and feels a private-sector option is preferable." Wow, that sounds like another insurance company deal.

Even in light of statements like this, the McGuinty government doesn't seem to get that a made-in-Ontario pension plan is the best option for everyone. How can they be that narrow? How can they not see it? We've even put the numbers in front of them.

It further stated that federal minister Flaherty "played down expectations of a wide-ranging deal on pension reform this fall." He's already playing it down. When the finance minister drives down to Ottawa or however he gets there, he might want to take some extra tires, because I think the tires are blowing out. It sounds like

they've already started to backtrack federally. There goes his big promise.

But, of course, it probably won't all happen, or nothing serious will happen, until after the election. They'll stand up, if they're fortunate enough to get in—I doubt it—and say, "We meant well. I'm sorry. You're out of luck, but maybe four years from now, we can fix it up." Pretty pathetic.

This is a warning bell, folks. This is a serious setback for pension reform in this country. This is a terrific opportunity for this government to finally get it right, to finally speak up on behalf of Ontarians, to finally work together with the opposition and start the process to implement the only real solution for Ontarians, the Ontario retirement plan submitted by the NDP.

What do they do instead? They call a time allocation motion on the puny bits that they've decided to include in Bill 120. "If we slip it through quick, maybe they won't know what hit them and maybe they'll realize, when they wake up the next day after the bill goes through, that, oops, there's a few things missing here. It doesn't sound like we're going to get any money out of them." It looks good on paper; it looks fancy. It's pretty thick. It's thick, all right.

Alberta opposes a public sector option—what a surprise. Alberta: There's a stronghold for socialism. The federal finance minister suggested that things would be moving more quickly if we had co-operation from Alberta and Quebec. Interesting.

It's my understanding that if two thirds of Canadians and two thirds of the provinces or territories endorse this, it goes through without Alberta and Quebec. It goes through without them. Ontario has one third or better of the population of Canada. They certainly would have the ability to push this through, but now we're getting backtracks from both ends of it; the Liberals and the feds are both backtracking.

In the midst of all this talk we need to keep our minds open to how the workers and pensioners at Nortel and AbitibiBowater must be feeling, listening to this rhetoric. I tell you that I've talked with these folks, and they don't need more pension education. They could likely give the seminar to most politicians. What they need is security for their current pension plans and security at current values for the pension benefits guarantee fund. They don't need so much education; they need money in their pockets. Do the right thing. Help them out.

One of the most bothersome things is that our finance minister, by his antics and over-the-top rhetoric, appears to deliberately be diverting attention away from him and his inaction. I'll reiterate: He is responsible for 70% of the pension plans in this province, so how do you avoid dealing directly with this problem? He's directing his attention to the federal government and blaming it on CPP.

That's easy to do. The other guy did it. Don't vote for them; they did it. He's not doing his job, and he's not doing what he should do for the people of Ontario.

The NDP has maintained that we should supplement the CPP—we encourage improvements to CPP—and old age security with the Ontario pension plan for the 65% of Ontarians who don't have a workplace pension plan.

I'm going to leave a couple of minutes for the member from Welland to discuss this and get his points in because he represents an area that's been hard hit, also.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to spend just under 15 minutes to talk about Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. What we're really debating today, of course, is the time allocation motion on that legislation that Big Brother has brought in.

My complaint here this evening goes back to Bill 236, which was the compendium legislation to this Bill 120. That was called the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, and it received royal assent on May 18 of this year. I'm still waiting for the regulations to be passed.

1720

I want to go through a chronology of what I've been doing and what thousands of paramedics, firefighters, municipal employees and MPAC employees have been trying to urge the government—we were happy that it received royal assent, Bill 236. My party voted for it, and we were happy to see the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, but we're waiting too long for the regulations.

I can remember, before the act passed, when it was before Parliament, having a briefing with Ministry of Finance officials. We brought some paramedic representatives, Dave Coursey and some people from my area of the province. We were told that the regulations were almost written and that they would be available soon after the bill received royal assent, which it did in May.

Just to recap what I've been doing on behalf of paramedics and how Bill 236, the first part of this pension legislation, was to help them and hopefully will help them: Just over a year ago, a fellow named Dave Coursey came to see me in my Collingwood office. He's a constituent of mine. He lives in Anten Mills. He's a paramedic with the county of Simcoe. He came to see me about a problem he and a number of his colleagues had with their pensions.

When paramedic services were divested from the province to the county in the 1990s, Dave went from working at Royal Victoria Hospital, where he was enrolled in what, at that time, was called the hospitals of Ontario pension plan, or HOOPP, to working for the county of Simcoe, where he was then enrolled in the Ontario municipal employees retirement system, OMERS.

Nothing really changed. He had the same job the day after he was transferred, in the same area, only Dave's paycheque and hundreds of paramedics' cheques were coming from the county or other counties instead of RVH, the Royal Victoria Hospital, or their local hospitals, where they might have worked and their ambulance might have been based in the past and where they were an employee in the past.

The problem with their pensions was, Dave and many others who were transferred from one ambulance service to another were never told what was happening with their pensions. They assumed that all of their years of service from HOOPP, which is now called the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, and others who were in the OPSEU pension trust, would be transferred to OMERS. In fact, they were assured that, many times along the way.

That didn't happen. While OMERS recognized his years of service, they were not able to transfer his pension assets over from HOOPP. That meant that he was destined to receive a significantly reduced pension through no fault of his own, and it's well over \$30,000 a year—no fault of the paramedics at all. We changed their employer. Their job stayed the same. I was a member of cabinet at the time, and I remember that it was never raised that this was a problem until they started to retire, I say to the member from Quinte-Northumberland West, in the last couple of years and realized they were going to get two pension cheques from two different streams, but combined, they wouldn't get more. They were entitled to more if they were allowed to roll it into one pension plan.

The pension plans want to do this. The government wants to do it. Mr. Duncan has given his assurance. The member from Peterborough has spoken about it positively in this House. We just need all members to urge the Minister of Finance and the Premier and the bureaucrats at Finance to get the regulations out and to get them right so that we're not stalled again.

I'll just go on to say that a little-known section of the Pension Benefits Act prevented the transfer of pension assets when they changed employers. Again, even though HOOPP and OMERS both said they would be happy to do it, they couldn't. So I made a commitment to Dave back then that I would do my best to try to get the government to change the act. We met with representatives of OMERS, who said that they'd be supportive and that they agreed the change needed to happen, because apparently they get thousands of inquiries a year from people who are now realizing that they need their pensions rolled into one plan to receive all the benefits which they had earned over their many years of public service in the province of Ontario. OMERS told us at the time that they had recommended the change to government in some of their published reports, and they provided me with copies of the reports. This issue has gone on for quite a long time under the guise of this government, I must say, since it came to light.

In May 2009 I introduced a private member's bill to change the law and I tabled a resolution asking the government to fix it. When the resolution was debated in June of that year, the Liberals voted against it, as they normally do, and then brought in their own pension law to fix the problem later. It was called, as I said, Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act. It seized upon my recommendation and that of the Expert Commission on Pensions, which said that the government should move to

allow asset transfers for people affected by past divestment.

I voted in favour, as did my party, of Bill 236, and did what I could to see that it was passed quickly in the House, and it was. But now we have a problem: The government is dragging its feet when it comes to introducing the regulations to the bill to allow people like Dave Coursey to move forward and transfer their pension assets.

Everyone was excited when Bill 236 was passed. They were hopeful that relief would now come to put this stressful situation behind them. Unfortunately, they aren't feeling all that good anymore. The Liberals have not proclaimed or introduced the regulations necessary for them to move forward.

Here's a sample of what they've been hearing. When Dave contacted his pension provider, here's what they said. This is just one of many emails that were exchanged dating back to June of this year:

"Hello Mr. Coursey,

"I am writing further to your email to Dev Tandon on September 5, 2010, and our subsequent telephone conversation.

"As we disused, OMERS is aware of your situation and shares in your frustration with respect to the pace at which Bill 236 is progressing.

"As you know, although the bill is now legislation, its divestment provisions cannot be applied until they are proclaimed and regulations filed. It will not be until this process is complete that OMERS will be in a position to interpret the legislation and any resulting regulations and determine what, if any, effect it will have on divested members who wish to consolidate their benefits under one pension plan.

"We are monitoring the situation and will act quickly when there is something" to act upon.

"In response to your inquiry about potentially reaching 35 years of combined service in November 2010, I can confirm that your contributions and accrual of credited service will cease upon attainment of 35 years credited service in OMERS. However, we do not include any service that has yet to be transferred in this calculation. Therefore, if no transfer has occurred by November your contributions and accrual will continue as normal. Should your benefit become transferable from HOOPP to OMERS after November, and your combined service exceeds 35 years service, we will do all we can to accommodate the transfer while not exceeding the maximum service allowable in OMERS.

"I trust this addresses your concerns for now. I assure you that this matter is foremost on our agenda and we will announce any progress publicly as we learn of it. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

"Regards,

"Ron Laffin

"Senior pension policy analyst, pension services
"OMERS Administration Corporation."

Back in June of this year, Dave got similar answers and so did all of his colleagues working at the county of Simcoe. Here's another email that he received from HOOPP:

"Dear Mr. Coursey,

"Thank you for your email dated September 5, 2010 to the healthcare of Ontario pension plan (HOOPP) regarding Bill 236.

"Recently the government of Ontario released Bill 236 amending the Ontario Pension Benefits Act. However, it is important to note that although Bill 236 received royal assent ... on May 18, 2010, the provisions contained therein do not come into force until such time as the bill is proclaimed and the associated regulations have been finalized and published. HOOPP is closely monitoring the development of the new legislation, the effective date of the changes and will announce any changes as they occur. For this reason HOOPP cannot provide any commentary on the proposed changes and the effect they will have on HOOPP until such time as the required regulations have been released.

"If you have any questions" contact us.

"Sincerely,

"Yvonne Monjo

"Client services analyst

"HOOPP-healthcare of Ontario pension plan."

Again, this is obviously very frustrating. There's the two major pension plans saying that they, too, are waiting for the regulations. They're not negative in any way; they're just saying that they have to wait until they actually see the proclaimed regulations to see if they will do what the government promised they would do, and that was to help people like Dave Coursey and paramedics.

Since I went first, of course, and introduced in 2009 my private member's bill and resolution, I've received thousands of emails from not only paramedics—some firefighters, some police were caught up in this, and many MPAC employees were caught up in this, and they didn't know it. Again, it wasn't until they started to retire in the last couple of years that some went to their financial advisers, and many, like Dave Coursey—a very smart fellow—figured it out themselves.

I want to read for the record, because I promised I would, one of Dave Coursey's letters to the Premier:

"My name is Dave Coursey. I have been a paramedic in Simcoe county for 36 years, the last 10 as a platoon supervisor. In 2001 when we were downloaded to the upper tiered municipality (Simcoe) I had 25 years of pensionable service with the Royal Victoria Hospital service. These years were divested. I was transferred over to OMERS as a group not as an independent from HOOPP. According to the Ontario pension act, section 80, divested pensions are not able to be transferred into another pension.

"For the last 10 years I have been advocating to have this changed. I met with Mr. Jim Wilson, MPP for Simcoe Grey. With his assistance we introduced Bill 236 in the Legislature. As I am sure you are aware the bill

was passed May 5, 2010, and is now awaiting proclamation.

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"The bill will change the Ontario pension act, allowing me and some 20,000 others to combine our pensions into one, thus allowing us to retire comfortably. The issue here is a large number of us are closing in, or have surpassed what would be considered the maximum contribution date. Due to this bill being held up, none of us can plan for our retirement. Most of the 20,000 are either past 30 years of combined contributory service or close to it. Until the bill, as I understand it, completes proclamation, the various pension plans are unable to act.

"Could you explain to me approximately how much longer this will take to be put into effect? I've been in contact with both OMERS, OPTRUST and HOOPP. They are just as anxious to have this implemented so they may proceed with the necessary transactions.

"I am sure you can appreciate how frustrating it is to contribute to a plan for over 36 years and not know when you can officially retire.

"I appreciate your attention to this matter and anxiously await your reply....

"David Coursey

"D Platoon North Supervisor

"Simcoe County Paramedic Services."

Again, the issue is fairly simple. I don't have much confidence that the bill that this time allocation motion applies to will get any faster attention. It's a more complicated bill than the first bill that I'm talking about, Bill 236 that the government put through. If it's taking them this long, especially when we were assured that the regulations were ready when the bill was going through the House prior to May and then it had royal assent, and it became law in May—we were assured that the regulations were pretty much done. Clearly, we had a good meeting with the Ministry of Finance, the senior bureaucrats and people who were drafting the bill while the bill was before the House. They understood very clearly what the 20,000 paramedics and others needed from the government, and I don't understand why it's held up.

I have probably one of the worst responses that I have ever received. It doesn't say anything. I got a response—after I wrote the Premier on October 14, I got a backdated letter from Mr. Duncan, the finance minister, of October 8, saying, "Sorry I've taken so long to respond to you." He goes on to say—he gives me a bunch of gobbledygook and says that business regulations come out January and July of each year, so I guess that means we have to wait until January.

I don't know if this is a business regulation; it doesn't seem like a business regulation to me. It doesn't cost the government any money to combine these pension plans. The money has already been paid into the separate pension plans. The pension plans are willing to combine them together to give these paramedics and others—David Coursey and people who have given public service for, as he says, 36 years in his case—what they paid for,

and again, there's no new money coming from the government.

When we debated the first bill, Bill 236, the government admitted that money will simply be transferred between the plans and consolidated so that, again, they will be able to retire comfortably and not be ripped off, because currently, through no fault of their own, we ripped them off. We didn't mean to, and we apologize for it; we're trying to do everything we can. I know there are a lot of Liberals across the way nodding in the affirmative. They all agree. So when we're done with this debate today, which is in about 15 minutes, please, if you see Mr. Duncan in the next 24 hours, ask him to get the regulations to Bill 236 out and to make sure they're done right, as he has had a lot of time, and let's move forward. Then we can properly look at Bill 120 and perhaps have some confidence that it will do what it says it's going to do, because it deals with defined benefit contributions and a lot of really important matters quite more complicated than Bill 236.

Again, I don't have much confidence in Bill 120, given that Bill 236 isn't even wrapped up and it was supposed to be done before Bill 120 was even introduced.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker, and I have but a few moments to speak to this time allocation motion. The reason I only have a few moments is that this time allocation motion is in fact time-allocated. This Liberal government has a real penchant for curtailing debate, for imposing the guillotine motion, for ensuring that the public doesn't have access to the committee process. This government has a real penchant for doing things increasingly behind closed doors and increasingly less so in public view, never mind public participation.

Let's understand what this—look, this bill is the government's bill two in response to the Arthurs report. The Arthurs report is comprehensive and contains some very valuable recommendations. Unfortunately, some of the most critical recommendations, like expanding the pension benefits guarantee fund benefit to \$2,500 a month maximum from \$1,000—the failure of this government to respond positively to that explains why they don't want committee hearings. The committee's going to meet for two days, from 12:30 to 3 p.m. Let's see, that's two and a half hours a day here in Toronto. I'm sure they don't want to talk to Atlas Steel workers down in Welland, who lost not only their jobs when that plant shut down but lost their pensions, and for whom the maximum now is still \$1,000 a month by way of pension benefits, because those workers would say that this government has not served them well by not accepting the recommendation of Arthurs to increase the pension benefits guarantee fund coverage to \$2,500 a month. Not even to \$1,500 or \$2,000 a month; this government is capping that benefit fund at \$1,000 a month, leaving huge

numbers of families down where I come from, like Atlas Steel workers and their widows, and forcing them to live on sub-poverty incomes.

I've never voted for a time allocation motion in all the 22 years that I've been here.

Mr. David Zimmer: Not when you were in government?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've never voted for a time allocation motion in all the time that I've been here. Time allocation motions aren't new, but they're far more frequent than they ever have been—that I'm aware of—the time allocation motion that not only cuts off debate, but then restricts access to committees and turns third reading into a sham, because third reading, by virtue of this motion, is one hour split equally three ways. The indignity—in the midst of this debate, I get served with yet another notice of time allocation, this time on Bill 122.

This government has a serious problem. It's got an addiction. There should be a 12-step program for people who are hooked on time allocation motions, and these 70-plus Liberal members could participate. I can see it now: "Hi, my name is David and I'm addicted to time allocation"; "Hi, my name is Monique and I'm addicted to time allocation"; "Hi, my name is Dalton and I'm addicted to time allocation." Because you can never deal with this until you confront it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, we will deal first with Mr. Miller's amendment to government notice of motion number 31.

Mr. Miller has moved that the motion be amended by adding to the start of the second paragraph, "That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet Monday, November 8, Tuesday, November 9, and Wednesday, November 10, 2010, for the purpose of holding public hearings in London, Ottawa and North Bay." Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I have received a deferral motion. The vote is deferred until tomorrow after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, November 3. Today's late shows are rescheduled for tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1739.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
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Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
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Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 November 2010

Mercredi 3 novembre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector, when Bill 122 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Monday, November 22, 2010, and Tuesday, November 23, 2010, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings and on Monday, November 29, 2010, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 12 noon on Friday, November 26, 2010. At 5 p.m. on Monday, November 29, 2010, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment for clause-by-clause consideration on November 29, 2010. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, November 30, 2010. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's my pleasure today to join the debate on Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

This bill, if passed, would bring in new rules and higher accountability standards for hospitals, local health integration networks, more commonly known as LHINs, and the broader public sector around the use of lobbyists, consultants and expenses.

More specifically, this bill would expand the freedom-of-information legislation to cover hospitals, and that would be effective January 1, 2012.

It would also require hospitals and LHINs to post expenses of senior executives online, and it would require hospitals and LHINs to report annually on their use of consultants.

Although the intent of this bill sounds reasonably good, we must be honest, and the truth is that this bill is in response to eHealth 2.0. It follows in the pattern of knee-jerk reactions that has been the trademark of this government over the last seven years.

Bill 122 is nothing more than a feeble attempt to respond to the findings of yet another scathing Auditor General's report. A year after being indicted by the Auditor General for wasting \$1 billion on eHealth Ontario, the Auditor General has confirmed that this government has once again been caught wasting health care dollars on Liberal insiders and consultants. The auditor's report revealed that the same waste and the same scandal that plagued eHealth Ontario also plagues the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and some Ontario hospitals.

Despite the Premier's promises to put a stop to the waste and mismanagement after last year's report, he has failed to do so, and the waste and the mismanagement continue. This year's shocking report showed that this government did not keep to their word and they did not stop the waste and mismanagement, thereby allowing it to further spread to the hospitals and the LHINs.

The auditor's report did not review all 14 LHINs; it focused on only three, which probably drew a sigh of relief from this government, as there would likely be more waste to be found if the remaining 11 LHINs were to be reviewed.

Although after last year's report the Premier gave the impression that things would change, I would like to highlight that the 2009 and 2010 reports had much of the same language. I quote last year's report: "Sound and reasonable policies were in place ... but all too often the rules were not followed."

0910

Let's move to the report this year: "We noted far too many instances at the hospitals we visited where sound public sector business practices were not followed." In last year's report, Ontarians were made aware of the favouritism taking place for Liberal-friendly consulting firms. The auditor said, "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding ... contracts are ... true." This year, again, it was much of the same. The auditor said that "The Ministry of Health ... found a way around the rules when it wanted to hire a favoured consultant ... we essentially felt the fix was in."

The auditor's language wasn't the only thing that was similar between last year and this year. The government's tone this year was just as apologetic as last year, but we mustn't forget that actions speak louder than words. I quote the Premier last year: "We didn't do enough to protect the interests of taxpayers." Well and good. And I quote the Minister of Health this year. She said, "I'm really sorry this has gone on. I don't think this is acceptable."

All this is fine and good, but the question remains: Why did this government allow these practices to continue? Why didn't they take it seriously last year or the year before or the year before? They waited until they were caught.

Their introduction of the Public Sector Expenses Review Act created new responsibilities for the Integrity Commissioner. She is now responsible for looking at the expenses of Ontario's 22 largest agencies. This new legislation is only applied to expenses incurred as of September 1, 2009; it wasn't retroactive. However, as we have seen with the scandals at eHealth Ontario and the Ontario Lottery Corp., the spending goes back much further, and what the Liberal government essentially did was give those 22 agencies a clean slate.

As I mentioned, the bill addresses 22 of the government's agencies, boards and commissions, but there are almost 630 of these agencies in total. The government chose to address 3.5% of these agencies and make them accountable, leaving the other 96.5% to continue to

spend, spend and spend without any oversight. So here we are today, then and after, yet another scathing auditor report, yet another apology from this government and yet another promise. And things are supposed to get better.

The truth is that these apologies and promises were empty. They weren't taken seriously because if they were, I wouldn't be standing here today and we wouldn't be debating Bill 122. This is a knee-jerk reaction.

If this government had taken last year's report findings seriously, they would have supported my colleague from Nepean—Carleton in her bill on May 6, 2010. It was Bill 39, the Truth in Government Act. A lot of problems that the auditor raised in his 2010 report would have been addressed had this government supported Bill 39.

Let me just remind the other side what Bill 39 set out to do. It would have expanded the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to apply to all public bodies. It would have had full protective disclosure of contracts over \$10,000 in value to apply to all—I repeat—all public bodies. It would have had full protective disclosure of all travel and hospitality expenses, and that would also apply to all public bodies. And it would have had full protective disclosure of all position reclassifications to apply to all public bodies.

This government failed. They failed to show Ontarians that they were serious about changing these problems, and they failed to support Bill 39. They used their overwhelming majority to defeat Bill 39. Although this government failed to support this important bill, it was supported by many others on this side of the House. Once again, the government used its overwhelming majority to defeat an important bill.

Kevin Gaudet of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said that Bill 39 would help shed light on government spending and that taxpayers should be able to know easily how their tax dollars are being spent by government. Well, that's what the taxpayers are asking for. That's what they expect.

Peter Coleman, president of the National Citizens Coalition, NCC, said: "The NCC has always stood for transparency and value for hard-working taxpayers. We fully support this bill"—Bill 39—"and hope that it becomes law and brings back honesty and stops the rampant waste and scandal that seem to be the norm under the McGuinty government."

Additionally, since 2004, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner has repeatedly—repeatedly—called for the expansion of freedom-of-information access to all agencies, boards and commissions in our province. Even the Ontario Hospital Association—get this—has called on the McGuinty Liberals to extend FOI legislation to hospitals. Hospitals are asking for it themselves.

Ontario families will not be fooled again into believing this government's latest promise to fix this mess. They don't want to see scandal after scandal from this government. They want to see front-line health care at its best, and that it not continue to be wasted. Plain and simple, Ontario families can no longer afford the

McGuinty government and cannot tolerate its empty words any longer.

It is time for this government to open their eyes to the very serious flaws, such as the use of lobbyists by hospitals and other public sector bodies, which are occurring under their watch. People can't get to the Premier. People can't get to the minister. People can't get to the minister's staff. It is totally unacceptable to use provincially allocated money to pay lobbyists to speak to the Premier on behalf of hospitals. It truly is mind-boggling. Why couldn't the hospitals have simply picked up the phone and called the minister, called her staff, called the Premier? Why couldn't they have done that themselves? Obviously, there is some concern from hospitals and others that they are not effectively getting the Premier's attention, the minister's attention or her staff's attention—the government is untouchable—and they need to hire consultants to do this, and in a lot of cases, Liberal-friendly consultants.

I would also strongly encourage this government to get their LHINs under control. They were brought in to supposedly provide seamless health care. However, what we have seen is wait-lists growing and Ontarians paying more and getting less. Ontarians want to see this government take action, not react to more negative reports on their mistakes, not react when they get caught. I hope they will take the findings of this year's auditor's report very seriously and ensure that this practice of hiring their favourite consultants stops—it stops with this report—and that Ontario health care dollars go to front-line support where they belong and where they should be going.

Ontarians will not continue to tolerate these end runs on good and responsible processes, and they will send the message to the McGuinty government, loud and clear, on October 6, 2011, 336 days from now. Are you counting, folks?

0920

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of Ontarians everywhere and express outrage at the government bringing in a closure motion.

The government, for those who are watching, is trying to shut down debate on a bill that shines a light on some pretty questionable practices in this province, I must say. They are shutting it down. They are going to allow only a couple of hours of hearings on a bill to look at the practice of using tax dollars to hire lobbyists to lobby their own government—Liberals to lobby Liberals. They're only going to allow a couple of hours of committee time for hearings, and then they're going to bring it back to the House for only an hour of debate at third reading.

The question, of course, that should be coming to the minds of all Ontarians: Why does the government want to put the lid on this already pretty anemic bill? I'm going to talk about how anemic this bill is in a minute.

Suffice to say that to bring in a closure motion—one might ask the Liberals across the aisle and some to the left of me here, why they are acting so illiberally on this?

This is shutting down debate in an area where the government actually is showing, I would profess, its true colours.

Its true colours are a government that is unresponsive, that will not answer the phone for hospitals or the MUSH sector generally and that forces hospitals and others to go to lobbyists, paying tax dollars so that they can get even a soupçon of, in this particular case more than any other, the Minister of Health's time. Now they want to shut down debate on it, and they want to limit hearing time.

I would think that a lot of private sector lobbyists would love to speak to the government about this. It might cost them their job, of course—not too soon, not for 15 months, not until after the next election. But still, a lot of Liberals are going to be out of work. I would think that they would have a large line around Queen's Park wanting to depute at the hearings about why their own team is putting them out of work all of a sudden—in 15 months—when the system has worked so seamlessly up until now. What better job if you lose your seat here or somewhere else, what better job if you're a party back-room boy or girl than to be a lobbyist speaking to your own folk on behalf of the MUSH sector?

The fact that the government professes such shock at this process is hilarious. It's hilarious. I mean, did not the Minister of Health know who was sitting across the desk from her with the shiny shoes and the briefcase? Did she not know this was a lobbyist? Do we not know, as MPPs, that lobbyists come and go in this place all the time? This is a shock to the government, that hospitals, LHINs and universities are forced to hire lobbyists just to get some of their time? This is a shock? Please. My goodness.

It's interesting that Bill 122 comes out the very same day as the auditor's report. It's as if they knew. It's as if they had maybe some advance warning. They table it the very same day.

What a bill it is that we are not allowed to debate here for more than a couple of hours and have only a couple of hours of hearings. "Get it out," the government says. "We don't want to talk about this issue anymore."

It's embarrassing to the government. Of course it is. If I were a Liberal, I would be embarrassed that hospitals had to hire lobbyists to speak to the health minister. The health minister stands up in this House, and she says, "Why didn't they just give me a call?"

I've yet to hear it, and I would ask anybody to bring forward the Hansard that gives her cell number, because, my goodness, it's hard enough to get time with any of the ministers even for MPPs on this side of the House, never mind those out there trying to do good work for Ontarians who are being told that the cheque is in the mail—unless, of course, you hire somebody who's going to facilitate that. Please.

I've talked to my hospitals. We've talked to our universities. We know what they're up against. They're fighting for every dollar from this government, and anything that will give them a slight edge with a minister, they will use. Of course they will; they're trying to do that on behalf of their constituents.

There was a particularly egregious comment, I thought, from the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan—an insinuation more than a comment—the other day in debate, when he insinuated that some MPPs may have better access to ministers than other MPPs, I suppose depending on what political party they come from. This is an affront to the voters of Ontario. This is an affront to all of our constituents, that there is not equal access to the ministers for all sides of the House; that there is not access, open and easy access, to the ministers by hospitals, if it's the Ministry of Health, or universities, if it's the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I mean, these are the bodies, the institutions, that deliver what this government mandates. The very least Ontarians should expect is that they have easy and open access to the ministers. That has clearly not been the case. They've had to hire lobbyists. Government shouldn't be shocked by that. They know who the lobbyists are. They probably even recommended them. They're sitting across the desk from them, often, in their offices. To feign shock is ludicrous, and I think voters and people in Ontario know how ludicrous it is. In fact, most of the folks from my constituency who contacted me about this thought it should be illegal.

It should be illegal. Unfortunately, it's not illegal. It's barely legal, but it's legal. You can do this. You can use taxpayers' dollars to lobby the government. Hey, if you're a municipal utility, you can even use taxpayers' dollars to contribute to the Liberal Party. My goodness. And the government doesn't quite understand the difference between public and private; I get that. Clearly their practices show that. They don't get that there is a difference.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Is Five Nations not-for-profit?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I hear a heckle from the Ottawa Centre member, who is clearly quoted, I think in Christina Blizzard's column, as not knowing the difference between private and public utilities and what's appropriate in terms of donations. Private, okay; public, not okay. Ontarians get that. The Liberal Party of Ontario doesn't get it. The McGuinty government doesn't get it. Everybody else gets it.

As the member from Burlington said, 22 agencies are covered by this bill, out of a possible 630. My goodness, what a weak bill. My goodness, what an anemic attempt at correcting a pervasive problem—and remember, not for 15 months, not until after the next election. I guess this is the first of many election promises we'll see roll out from the government: the promise that the use of lobbyists paid for by tax dollars will stop. Of course it won't, even when the bill presumably is passed, and of course it's going to be passed pretty swiftly, given the fact that we've got an hour left to debate it after today and there are only a few hours of hearings coming up in a couple of weeks. So hurry up, lobbyists; get your time. Say something, do something, because there's not a lot of time. You only have a few minutes each to depute, and then this debate will be shut down.

The bill, of course, at the centre of this, Bill 122: What does it promise? It asks, in the nicest of possible

language—it doesn't compel; it simply asks—that those people who are in the habit of using lobbyists with the public purse who are hired privately, outside the institution, stop. "We wish they would," says the bill. "We hope they do, and we hope they do and wish they would in 15 months." That's some hard-hitting legislation. Boy.

Of course, we all know what will happen and they know what will happen, too. We're not naive in this place. We know that the same hospitals and universities that now hire outside lobbyists will simply hire those lobbyists and make them part of the staff, so they'll now become inside lobbyists. They'll be called "government relations officers" and they'll be on staff.

0930

Of course, as the member from Burlington pointed out, all of this is merely speculation, because this is a bill that won't take effect until probably some other government is in place. This is a bill that, let's face it, may never take effect. Let's say it: It probably won't take effect ever. And yet we're still not allowed to debate it. Why aren't we allowed to debate it? Because, guess what, Ontarians who are listening, it's embarrassing to the government.

It's horrific to Ontarians that their tax dollars that are supposed to be used for front-line care, the education of their children and all sorts of other activities that are worthwhile are instead diverted to pay for lobbyists so that they can get time with ministers, when we all thought they should be accorded time with ministers by the very nature of who they are. Not so, we discover from the auditor's report. We discover that it takes a Liberal to talk to a Liberal. You have to pay a Liberal to talk to a Liberal. That's what we've discovered. Ontarians are horrified.

This followed closely on the heels of another scandal; of course, we all remember eHealth. Now we have the municipal utilities scandal, where they are donating directly to the Liberal Party. Why bother with niceties? Just give it directly to the Liberal Party—your tax dollars.

Really, what we're speaking about here is a government that has lost track, lost touch with what people in the constituencies are actually feeling and thinking.

I can tell you that what the people in my constituency are feeling and thinking is that they're barely scraping by, that they are, many of them—seniors, single mums, people on fixed incomes of all sorts, including salaries, those who are lucky enough to still have jobs—barely paying their bills. And many of them can't pay their bills. Many of them are struggling with their hydro bills, struggling with their utility bills, struggling, since the HST has been imposed, to simply get by.

When they see that their precious tax dollars—and their tax rate has gone up significantly under this government—aren't going to front-line services, aren't going to protect the environment, to look after the sick, to educate the children—no; their precious tax dollars are going to pay well-connected—i.e., Liberal—lobbyists and lobby firms to speak to the government on behalf of the institu-

tions where the dollars should be spent on the front-line activities those institutions are warranted to provide.

This bill at best is a soupçon, as I said; it's a nod in the direction of doing something. It doesn't actually do anything. It's a nod in the direction of possibly doing something. But even this is too much for the McGuinty government to bear, even debating this. Because one knows the answer: Unfortunately for my friends across the aisle, this is embarrassing; this will cost votes.

People know. They're not idiots out there. They know what's going on. They know where their tax dollars are going, and they're not going to provide what people thought they were going to provide. They're going into the pockets of Liberals. This isn't okay. This is not okay. This is not, as I said at the outset, very liberal of them. This is illiberal of this government.

I've even had Liberal supporters who have phoned my office, saying they're outraged by this latest round of revelations. They thought it all ended with eHealth; they thought it ended with OLG; they thought it ended with the imposition of the HST—this kind of grab on their wallets for yet more dollars to go who knows where. Sadly, that's not so.

I remember that one of the first things that happened after my election was—and I think we all remember it in this House; that was in the days before the \$21-billion deficit—when \$35 million just went out the back door, \$1 million of it to a cricket club. That was my introduction to the McGuinty government and the way that they handle money.

Since then we've seen eHealth, we've seen the scandals at OLG—government agency after government agency. Now we're seeing lobbyists and municipal utilities. It continues; it's clearly the way they do business. I would say to Ontarians: If you had any doubt about the way this government operates, that doubt should be put to rest because it's clear month in, month out, no matter what anemic bill is passed or foreclosed, as is happening here today, the government continues to do business as usual, and business as usual is, as my friend from Wel-land said, a kind of grantism: some people are in and some people are out. If you're connected, you're in, that is, in the minister's office sitting across from her or his chair or his desk; if you're out, you don't have access unless you connect with somebody who's in.

That is the way this province is being run. It has been run that way for the last seven years. This is simply more grist for that mill. This is simply pulling back the curtain, seeing the wizard at work, yet again; he never left, always at work, doing the same things that he's done before.

I think for voters out there who expect that somehow this government can be expected to change, that this government can somehow be expected to change the very nature of what it is overnight with an anemic bill like Bill 122 or a closure motion that forces us not to speak about embarrassing subjects like lobbyists paid on the public purse—the voting public gets it, finally, judging from the polls: what, 76% want a change? I think the voting public

finally gets that this government isn't going to change; that, in fact, this is the very nature of the beast of the McGuinty government; that they are a grantist government. They're a government that prefers to deal with people who are well connected; it doesn't want to hear from those who are out—real working families. It doesn't want to hear from them. They might want to hear from an advertising firm purporting to be them, but don't want to hear from them. No trust—their own little cabal of insiders, connected insiders, and that's who's running this government; not you—if you're watching at home—not you. Your tax dollars are being used but your input is not being listened to. The input that's being listened to is the input of the lobbyist, the lobbyist that's become a necessity in this province to get anything done. To get anything done, a lobbyist is now necessary. This is the way this government is structured.

It's quite sad that the best that the government can come back with—

Hon. James J. Bradley: They'll be banned from the Palais Royale.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have to check the ministry here because the McGuinty cabinet changes so often, I tend to forget; is this his fourth or fifth portfolio? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services used to be the Minister of Housing; he used to be the minister of something else, now the minister of that. In his heckles, he clearly doesn't understand the difference between public and private donations. This is how confused this government is, that they will come back at the opposition—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You took a donation. No kidding; we all take donations and we all have fundraising dinners. Surprise; it costs money to run political campaigns. What the voters get that the Liberal Party doesn't quite get is that there is a difference between using their tax dollars to support the Liberal Party and using private donations to support your party. That's a confusion—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Send the money back, if you're so holier than thou. Send it back.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: And the member from Peterborough—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We really don't need to yell in this place. The sound system is very good. Order.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The member from Peterborough seems to be taking umbrage at some of my comments. I too would be somewhat embarrassed to be associated with this latest scandal. I too would be upset. I don't fault my friends opposite for being upset.

0940

I think it's rather sad. The member from Peterborough is an excellent member; he's here all the time. He's the government whip, I understand. It's sad that, with the shuffle of the cabinet seats, somehow he has been left out. If I were him, I would be upset at that as well. Certainly a lot of people who are sitting in government

seats who should be represented in cabinet are not. Again, it's not my political party, not my issue, but I certainly understand the upset and the division in the ranks across the aisle. I certainly understand that many, many people with lots of experience are not reflected in the cabinet; that's true.

But to get back to the closure motion at hand, because that is what we are dealing with, a closure motion, something this government, when they were in opposition, used to rail against the Progressive Conservatives for when Mike Harris was in. I remember it well. I was not sitting here then. I was one of the voters out there, though, and I remember it well: the closure motions, the horrendous closure motions of the Harris government. And guess who now, of course, repeats that process when they want to conveniently get something embarrassing off the desk of this particular Legislature?

For those who are listening in right now, who are foregoing perhaps some more entertaining programs, you should know that what you're listening to is a debate on a closure motion of a bill. The closure motion an attempt to shut down debate—that's what it does; that's its legislative function—and not only close down the debate but to limit the committee hours to two committee periods, literally hours, in a couple of weeks, so not a lot of notice if you want to depute to the bill that they're trying to shut down debate on, and then come back to the House for only one hour of debate after that.

Then the next question of viewers, I know, is, "What are they trying to shut down? Why don't they want to hear about the bill?" That brings us to Bill 122. The reason the McGuinty government doesn't want to hear more about this bill is because it's embarrassing. It's about the use of public dollars, tax dollars, to hire lobbyists from hospitals, LHINs and other institutions to this government.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Are they banned from the Palais Royale?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know, it's astounding. I hear the heckle again from the minister of whatever his portfolio is this week, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, about a fundraising dinner we are having for our leader—no kidding. I ask the Liberal Party where their fundraising dinners are held; I'm sure they are held at backwater inns. Come on. This is a company that has fundraising dinners—and it's a company for sure—at the Sheraton. Oh, my goodness. Would that we could afford such venues. And this is a government that uses your tax dollars to pay for the Sheraton. My goodness. Now we know those tax dollars go right to the Liberal Party from the utility companies.

It would be nice, voters—the next time the Liberals come to your neck of the woods to have a fundraising dinner, I would suggest that you have paid for your seat already and that you should get in free. You've certainly paid for your seat already with the amount of money flowing to lobbyists, the amount of money flowing from utilities to the Liberal Party directly for their campaigns. You've paid for your seat. Knock on the door of that

Sheraton—the Four Seasons Sheraton or wherever they're having it next; an expensive hotel, needless to say—and you should get the dinner gratis.

But to get back to what voters actually want to focus on, which is the use of taxpayers' dollars to hire lobbyists to lobby a government that presumably, supposedly, already had access, the Minister of Health says, "Just pick up the phone," but refuses to give her cellphone number. So I suggest to hospitals and institutions of all sorts, if you want to get your minister on the phone, it should be as easy as picking up the phone and phoning them. I would certainly ask that the ministers table their cellphone numbers so that people can.

I warrant the reason they don't is that they would fill up with cries of outrage from their own constituents. Something that we don't hear a lot of from this side are the cries of outrage from their constituents, which we know are there. One of the cries I hear is about the use of public dollars, public trust, to hire private, well-connected consultants. One of the cries of outrage I hear is about a government that is too frightened to debate their own bills and that shuts down debate and limits committee hearing time on a bill that is embarrassing to them. Other bills that are not so embarrassing, oh, we can debate them for a long time.

In fact, the bills that are the most embarrassing, we don't even see in this House, like the G20. Might I remind the voters of all of those thousands of letters I got about the G20 that we never saw that in this House, that in fact the democratic process was completely circumvented by this government over the G20 weekend. And that was when the House was in session.

But here we have a bill brought in at the same time as the auditor's report, as if they sort of knew what was coming—interesting. How did they know what was coming if they were so shocked and appalled at the use of lobbyists? Anyway, they knew it was coming, tabled the bill very quickly, in fact, the same day; it was already written up. Anemic bill that it is, it doesn't take effect for 15 months—after the next election. It doesn't make it compulsory that folk not hire outside lobbyists. In fact, it opens the doors for inside, in-house government relations lobbyists. It only purports to cover 22 out of 630 agencies.

This is the anemic response, but still, it's a chance for us in opposition to—

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It would be nice to actually hear from some of the Liberal backbenchers—not simply from the cabinet members, who are good at heckling—about what they feel, what they're hearing from their constituents about the use of lobbyists and the use of utility dollars going to Liberal fundraising, because I know they hear.

I know they hear from their constituents about the HST. I know they've heard about hydro rates from their constituents. I know they've heard about the stupid meters that are being installed that are going to be yet another tax grab. I hear that from my constituents, and I

know that they send petitions to this government, many of which they wish their members would read in the House, as is their duty, even if they don't agree with their constituents.

It would be nice to hear all of that from the other side. But instead, we get a seamlessness from the other side of the aisle, a battening down of the hatches and a kind of coming together over what, I think, people should admit is a very embarrassing moment in the life of this government, a very embarrassing, dark moment, just like the \$35-million slush fund was—\$1 million going to a cricket club etc.—just like eHealth was, just like the OLG scandals were. All of these are embarrassing moments, and I think Ontarian voters would like to hear an explanation for why this continues to happen over and over again. If this is not the culture of this government, then one would wonder what is.

I'm going to leave some time for my benchmate from Timmins—James Bay, who, I'm sure, will share with you some of what his constituents are saying about how they feel about the use of taxpayers' dollars for connected Liberal lobbyists.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm sure that he will want to respond to—his ministry of this week is the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services—those heckles about fundraising venues when they, in fact, have the most expensive venues. As I suggested to those Ontario voters at home, they've already paid for their seat at the next Liberal fundraiser; they should get in for free and have a free meal at Four Points Sheraton or wherever they are.

I'm going to leave some time. It was a pleasure to bring the voice of people I hear from all the time in my constituency and other stakeholders' groups about this embarrassing issue. It's a dark, dark day in the dark life of the McGuinty government. It's been a scandal-plagued government for seven years. This is yet the latest scandal—sadly. I wish it were not so.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I find it particularly instructive that not one member of the government chose to stand up in two opportunities to speak to this legislation and to shut down debate on an accountability bill.

Let's be very clear: The Liberals want to pretend that they stand for accountability and transparency, yet when there is an opportunity to debate an accountability and transparency bill, they shut down debate. They then not only wish to shut down the debate, but as they do it they refuse to debate even members of the opposition, whether it is the Progressive Conservative caucus or the New Democrats. I find that that is probably the most troubling scenario for legislators when we are discussing something as important as taxpayer dollars intended for health care, which, by the way, is why we are here. We are here because the Liberal government reacted to an auditor's report of two weeks ago, on October 20, 2010. At that

time, the Auditor General revealed that despite Mr. McGuinty's promise to stop spending the hard-earned money of Ontario families on Liberal-friendly consultants in Ontario, the same problems that plagued eHealth continued to plague the Ministry of Health, the local health integration networks—which we have heard so much about through the Ombudsman reports and through our own party's efforts—and, of course, Ontario hospitals.

Let me be very clear: We are debating a Liberal motion to shut down debate on how to better spend health care dollars in the province of Ontario. That is what we are doing right now. The Liberals have taken away the opportunity for members in the third party and in my party, the Progressive Conservative Party, to debate how to best spend health care dollars in the health care system, whether that is in the troubled LHINs, at our hospitals or even in the ministry, and they have reduced us to debating time allocation. They have reduced us in this chamber to debating the amount of time we are able to spend on a very important bill, one that could improve the way our health care dollars are spent. Instead, they want to shut that down. They want to shut down debate and they want to hide from Ontarians the real issues at hand.

I want to go through a little bit of background on the bill and why this particular bill, this transparency bill, was put forward. The ministry spent \$223 million on consultants in the last three years. The ministry ran a competitive tendering process in August 2009 for a contract; however, they chose to negotiate solely with the highest bidder of the 12 projects received because the company had done the first two stages of the project. Well, the auditor found problems with that. The McKinsey and Co. contract for review of the pharmaceutical sector is specifically cited by the Auditor General for not being properly justified. This company was also cited for failing to provide enough details on its invoices for \$1.7 million in contracts with hospitals.

So this bill that they now want to force closure on, where they actually want us to talk about time allocation rather than the bill, was designed to respond to the Auditor General's report. The auditor found, and I want to repeat this, that \$223 million of health care money that could have been intended for MRIs, for hip replacements, for cancer treatments, instead went to consultants, and one company in particular was cited for failing to provide enough details on its invoices for \$1.7 million in contracts with hospitals. There are a lot of large numbers. But at the end of the day, we all know that that money, those health care dollars, were intended for health care.

Our party, the Progressive Conservative caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, has been very clear that as we move forward, the local health integration networks will be scrapped under a Progressive Conservative administration beginning next October. We've done this because we've found that they have become the middle manager, the bloated bureaucracy of the health care sys-

tem, where front-line health care dollars are taken away from the front line and put into administration.

The Ombudsman found some troubling and startling issues with the local health integration networks. But not only has our Ombudsman found issues, so too has the Auditor General. In the Auditor General's report on consulting in hospitals, the ministry and LHINs, this is what he found, and this is what the Liberals don't want people at home and in our communities to know: 75% of the sole-sourced contracts at the LHINs did not meet the requirements allowing for the exemptions.

One of the other reasons the Liberals want to shut down the debate today is because the auditor also found at the LHINs that two thirds of the consulting contracts had follow-on agreements and most were awarded without a competitive process or justification for the additional work. The Liberal government, under Dalton McGuinty, does not want anyone to know about that. That's why they're forcing us to close debate today.

And our friends at the LHINs, where even though it's become very clear that they're troubled—the Ombudsman and the auditor have said there are challenges there. The public has lost confidence in the LHINs. Our political party, the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, has said very explicitly that we will scrap the LHINs. The Liberal government continues to appoint people to these bureaucratic institutions. As we continue to hear horror stories coming out of these bureaucracies, the Liberals continue to try to legitimize them.

What the auditor also found: There was insufficient information on invoices to support the amount paid in 40% of the contracts examined. Of all the contracts examined by the Auditor General in his recent report on consultants at hospitals, the ministry and LHINs, 40% of those examined had insufficient information. I guess that's also why this Liberal government would want to shut down debate on a bill that presumably would have corrected this.

Finally, let's talk about the hospitals. Patients across Ontario go to our local hospitals because they expect to get the best care that they can receive in Canada's greatest province. But what we've found through the auditor's report is that the previous procurement policies at hospitals were neither as robust or comprehensive as those in the directives.

If I might just talk a little bit about this bill, this bill has nothing to do with transparency and accountability as we would like to see it in the Progressive Conservative Party. We put forward five robust measures in the Truth in Government Act last spring that would have eliminated any possibility of breaches or waste in government. This Liberal government refused to support it. Instead, they've given us this watered-down, weak, facile version of a transparency bill, that they're now trying to shut down, that is littered with directives that don't need to be followed. If you're reading what Mr. McCarter wrote in his auditor's report, you would see that people were not putting forward procurement policies in hospitals that

were as robust or as comprehensive as in ministry directives.

You failed. This Liberal government has failed, and they have continued to fail when it comes to putting health care dollars where they are intended.

Let's go back, though, to the hospitals and what Mr. McCarter found. Many of the contracts were single-sourced and allowed to grow from small assignments to projects over several million dollars. Let me give you an example. This would mean that a small contract for maybe several thousands of dollars would be extended, rather than going back out to tender. Then, multi-millions of dollars later, Liberal consultants were getting rich because they were able to bypass the tendering program.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I can tell that my colleagues opposite in the Liberal Party are chatty now. It's unfortunate they didn't take the opportunity to stand in their place to debate this closure motion. They don't have the courage to do it; they don't have the conviction to do it. They want to shut down debate. They don't want to hear what they have done.

Again, every minute they're here, they lose points in the polls because people have lost confidence in this Liberal government, particularly when it comes to how they are spending our health care dollars. Time and again, we find out, whether it's through the LHINs, through eHealth, through Cancer Care Ontario or through this most recent report, they are squandering our health care dollars and they're going to consultants.

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Let me get back to the hospitals, because this is important. Many consultants, as we found out from the auditor, charged for expensive meals, alcohol, accommodations, conferences and unauthorized fees without questioning by hospital staff.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Sounds like the old Tory cabinet.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I hear from the chatterbox there in the front row. If he wants to go back 10 years, go back 10 years, but the people of this province want to move forward. They're tired of hearing from you. They're going to defeat you in the next election, because the people of this province want to move forward.

My colleague from Burlington points out that in 336 days, the people of this province will adjudicate on whether they want to move backward with the Liberal Party or forward with the Progressive Conservatives under Tim Hudak.

Let me also explain something else that came out of the auditor's report of two weeks ago. In some cases, the highest bidder was awarded contracts when a tendering process was done. There was a reliance on the same group of consultants—you should know this—who have done work previously for hospitals. Once they got their foot in the door, they received large, untendered contracts. That's what the Liberal Party doesn't want you—and they don't want you and they don't want Mr. Bisson from Timmins-James Bay—to know. They want to shut

down debate because they don't want the public to listen to some of these egregious examples.

Similar to eHealth, consultants filled senior management positions at hospitals. One such consultant serving as a senior executive was paid \$275,000 each year and claimed \$97,000 in fees and a further \$50,000 in administrative support services. This same consultant billed for a bonus, a foreign exchange fee, a Christmas luncheon, a \$400-a-night hotel in Chicago, \$500 for hotel phone charges and a \$300 dinner. If that's not hitting the jackpot off the back of the Ontario patient, what is?

I can tell you something: This is clearly unacceptable. That is why the Progressive Conservative Party stands opposed to this Liberal government and that is why, with the absence of any strong legislation, we will oppose this bill unless they adopt the Truth in Government Act that we put forward that would have prevented these exact abuses. We put that forward. The Liberals opposed it until they got caught. Make no mistake: This recent auditor's report has ensured that they have been caught.

Let's go to another consultant, who took a personal vacation to Japan while on a business trip to Hong Kong. The hospital paid his expenses to go to Japan and his billing fees while he was on vacation. The consultant did later reimburse half of the airfare but not the full airfare.

To further this example of abuse in our health care system, hospitals often paid for consulting contracts that were contracted by the ministry or the LHIN.

But again, we are debating shutting down debate here because this Liberal government does not want the public to know. They want it to be their dirty little secret, but let me assure you that it's not going to be, because this Progressive Conservative caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, will continue to expose the flagrant abuses of taxpayer dollars, particularly in the health care system, each and every day in the leadup to the next election, which is, by the way, in 336 days, when Ontarians are given the opportunity to say, "No more closure, no more time allocation, no more spending scandals and no more." Ladies and gentlemen, they're going to have an opportunity to tell this government, "Time is up. The jig is up. Your waste, your mismanagement are up."

I want to just point out one further point on the auditor's report before I start to talk a little bit more about the bill that the Liberals don't want us to talk about. They've given me the opportunity to point out that eight of the 16 hospitals the AG looked at had lobbyists. These hospitals spent a combined \$1.6 million on those lobbyists. The Auditor General questioned whether that was appropriate.

The question many of us have is: Why do our local hospitals even have to pay a high-priced lobbyist? Many of us in this chamber consider ourselves to be the lobbyist-in-chief in our communities, to defend the interests of our constituents, our public institutions, and to bring them to the floor of this chamber. But this Liberal government has changed all that. They have created a culture of entitlement, a culture in which people in the public sector feel that they must go over the heads of

their local politician and pay for a high-priced consultant in order to get access to the Minister of Health or her advisers. I consider that an embarrassment. I consider that a fundamental break in the system that we rely on in a democracy. We've forgotten, or at least the Liberals have forgotten, that what their job is to do is to come to this chamber, to debate the ideas of the day, and to express the interests, the concerns and the problems in their communities.

That's how things are supposed to be done. This crowd here have forgotten that or they never really knew it. That is the question. Which is it? We're not quite sure.

As we move forward and this bill goes to committee, the Progressive Conservative caucus will be putting forward reasoned and sound amendments, many of which have information that we already obtained today as a government and many of which can be acted upon with little or no cost. Again, it will be the basis and the foundation of the Truth in Government Act that has five robust measures that would protect taxpayer dollars.

The Liberals refused to support that bill until they were caught; then they created with this bill a watered-down version, a watered-down, weak piece of legislation that is chock full of directives and a law that they probably won't even follow, because we've seen this before where they have promised us legislation, they have told us they were going to improve things, they have said we can do better—which has become the government's new mantra. You can hear the Premier speak every day, saying, "We can do better." You're darned right we can do better, with the Truth in Government Act, which was better than this bill.

This is a bill, by the way, that, as I mentioned, is chock full of directives that aren't law.

Mr. Phil McNeely: You didn't cover lobbyists.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is, and you know this, member from Ottawa—Orléans, that your government could have done better, but you chose not to until you got caught, so you put this bill forward. And in reality, many of the bills they put forward, they break anyway. When you look at the boards, agencies and commissions that they were supposed to put online so that we could monitor their expenses, they broke that. Ministers were supposed to put their expenses online; not all of them have. They put forward a piece of legislation that would have called for a review of the local health integration networks, and they broke their own law; they chose not to do it. Yet they, in this piece of legislation, put forward a very weak line that says the minister may call for a review of the LHINs. Well, whoop-de-doo. They already broke their own law. They've betrayed the trust of the public; they've mismanaged health care dollars. What more can they do?

I have to tell you, I have people asking if there's a way to get this government out early, if there's a way we can call for an early election. Can we recall them? That's the number one issue, outside of the hydro rate increases. Then every single time they come out with a new auditor's report or an Ombudsman's report, the people get

more frustrated. The people of this province are tired; they're fed up with this Liberal sense of entitlement.

Warren Kinsella once said, "A Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal." Well, I can tell you something: If the sponsorship scandal showed us anything, it's that this group used the Gomery inquiry as a textbook. It's embarrassing, but particularly when it's our health care dollars. Have you people no shame? It's unbelievable. The Toronto Star disclosed many of these issues, and I think that was what set the auditor off.

Just to recapitulate the issue here, we have a government that voted down the transparency and accountability bill, the Truth in Government Act, in the spring. The auditor came out in October with a damning report that would have gone to the minister weeks before so she would have been able to see what was in it. And the report was so damning that instead of actually standing and defending the record, because the record is so bad that they didn't want to defend it, they put forward this transparency and accountability bill which now they don't want to even debate. They don't want to be transparent or accountable about the bill, so they're forcing us to close down the bill.

So we've got multiple issues here: one, the utter failure of the Liberal government to cut off and prevent this type of abuse. We have them steadfastly denying support to a piece of legislation earlier in the year that would have prevented the types of abuses in the auditor's report. We have an auditor's report that went back and looked at the Liberal government's mismanagement of taxpayer dollars intended for health care, and it was awful. And then we have a bill that's now supposed to save everybody's day, but is so weak that unless it has substantive amendments, no one can support it because it is another piece of legislation that they'll probably repeal or ignore.

1010

Then we have the fact that they're closing down debate on that bill which was a result of the exposé by the Auditor General, which came as a result of the research done by the opposition that showed the abuses, which would have been prevented by a bill we put forward. The timeline, when you compare it to what we're dealing with today, is just unbelievable. It's unfortunate too, because we've got taxpayers across the province who expect and demand better.

But this crowd here, they've gotten so comfortable in their nice chairs and their nice limousines and their nice dinners out—they've gotten so comfortable in the big chairs that they have forgotten what it means.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Does Tim have a limousine?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My good colleague there, the chatterbox from St. Catharines, has continually tried to disrupt me, but I can assure him that the leader of the official opposition drives a minivan, just like I do because—guess what?—that's what happens when you're raising a family. But you know what? It's also one of the important things—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Leader of the Opposition has a government car.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The leader of the official opposition drives a minivan, just as I do, but the reality is that the minister responsible for whatever he is now—because he keeps changing—doesn't want to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I think, member from Nepean—Carleton, it's getting just a little personal, and we don't like to do that in this place.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, but let's be totally honest here. The reality of why they want to shout me out and not allow me to continue to talk is exactly the same reason they put forward this closure motion: They don't want the sunlight on their books. They don't want the public to know what they've done, and they certainly don't want them to know in the leadup to the next election, which is—what?—336 days away.

I will continue to bring to this House my concerns. The Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to bring to this House our concerns. And our leader, Tim Hudak, will certainly travel this province and speak to the taxpayers of this province, and he will work with them to ensure that there is value for money, particularly where our health care dollars are at work.

Again, the people of this province are losing confidence, and they're losing confidence because this is a government that is now in its second term and feels so secure that they think they can tell taxpayers what to do. They think they are immune to any type of criticism, and they believe what they are doing is right. But we can tell them—and I'm sure my colleagues from the third party will tell them as well—that the people of this province are tired of them. They're tired; they're tired; they're tired. They wish they could find an alternative, and they've found it, I believe, in the Progressive Conservative caucus.

But this government still has 11 months to make good and make right, and all they have to do when this bill finally goes to committee—and it will now, because they're forcing us to close down debate even though half of our caucus still wants to speak to this bill. They have an opportunity, when this bill goes to committee, to social policy: They can put forward and adopt reasoned amendments or they can adopt our own amendments, which will strengthen trust in government, which will strengthen truth in government and which will strengthen the rules on how our tax dollars are governed.

They're not interested, because for them a band-aid is a band-aid, the way a Liberal is a Liberal. The reality of this crowd—they just want to skip from this crisis because I'm sure there's going to be another crisis down the road. Well, we're already dealing with it. As my colleague from the third party said earlier—from Parkdale—High Park—they're now dealing with their smart meters. Our party calls them tax machines; her party calls them the stupid meters. Whichever way you slice or dice it, it's a new scandal; it's another scandal. This government is unwilling to talk to the people of the province about the challenges that they're faced with because they're so comfortable. In the comfort of their own seats and their nice offices across the way, they've forgotten to listen to

the very people who have sent them to this place. How else can you explain this bill, the circumstances that led to the bill and now the closure of this debate? They've embarrassed themselves and they have embarrassed the rest of us by doing this.

I would urge the Liberal backbenchers in that caucus to stand up to the minister and the House leader and demand that we have the opportunity to complete debate on this bill, to get to the root of the problem so we can best prevent further abuses of our tax dollars, particularly when they are in our health care system.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the west members' gallery today we have Paul Brown, who visits with government officials on a regular basis, and on Take Our Kids to Work Day he has with him his daughter Danielle.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature today Lavie Cymbalist, who is here visiting all the way from Israel.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Avtar Singh Khangura. He is head of a village municipal council and also head of a regional council in the state of Punjab. Visiting with him also is Lakveer Singh Khangura. They are both from my wife's paternal village.

I would also like to welcome Jonelle Dholah-Davis, a grade 9 student from The Woodlands high school, who is here as part of the Take Our Kids to Work program along with her grandmother Simone Dholah. Both are from my riding of Mississauga-Erindale.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's with pleasure that I welcome Mr. Bruce Annan, managing director of AIM Group, as well as Mr. Rod Urquhart, journalist and editor of the Voice of the Farmer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I would like to welcome Anthony Passaretti, who has been working in my constituency office. He's brought his sister Vanessa Passaretti to Queen's Park today for Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. I'd like to welcome to question period the 46 children and their parents, friends and relatives who work at the Ministries of Finance and Revenue, who will be attending today.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'd like to introduce two young ladies from Mississauga South. They're in grade 9 at Lorne Park high school. Joining us today is Kaasha Babiash, and she's joined by the youngest of my three children, Jessica Elizabeth Sousa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I too want to introduce one of our people here today for Take Our Kids to Work Day.

Danielle Collier, who is a grade 9 student at Leaside, is here somewhere. She is the niece of Melissa Thomson, who is one of our valued public servants.

I also want to introduce the father, mother, grandmother, grandfather and another grandmother of the page from Markham-Unionville, Soumiya Suresh. As I say, her father, mother, grandmother from India, grandfather and grandmother are here with us today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I, too, have a number of visitors today. I'd like to welcome our page Nicholas Waltenbury's parents, Dawn and Al, and his brother Spencer, who are here today with us. We're very excited to have them here.

As well, it being bring your grade 9 to work day, my good friend Karen Pitre asked me to take Sean Pitre with us, and he's with us here today. We're very excited to have him. He's having a great day.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Shadi Mousavi of Richmond Hill. She is visiting Queen's Park for the Take Our Kids to Work Day program. Welcome.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I have two welcomes. First of all, I want to welcome to the Legislature the executive officers of the Ontario Home Builders' Association. They represent 29 local associations and over 4,000 members. And I'd like to offer a special welcome to Mr. David Horton, executive director of the home builders, and thank him for his 25 years of dedication and service to the association.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like to welcome to the House Matthew Gledhill from Sherwood high school in Hamilton. Matthew is here with his father for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Matthew is the son of Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN chair Juanita Gledhill. I also understand that Matthew is quite the hockey player. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that all the members are aware of this group that is here today in the Legislature, and I would like them to welcome the members who are here for the Campaign to Control Cancer. We appreciate their presence here and the information that they're going to share with all of the members in this place. I wish them all well.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd like to introduce Kim Fairhall and the grade 10 civics class from Huntsville High School, who are down here at Queen's Park today in the east visitors' gallery.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome John Cary, the founding member of Trees Ontario. He's in the members' gallery. For those of you unaware of their good work, Trees Ontario is a not-for-profit organization that helps bring together partners and volunteers from across Ontario to implement tree planting programs, and Trees Ontario is helping our government deliver on our goal of planting 50 million trees in southern Ontario. Welcome, John.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Welcome to the kids from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I am very, very proud that these fine young citizens are here today with their parents viewing what government is all about.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: On Take Our Kids to Work Day, I'd like to welcome Jason, the son of Christine Innes, my chief of staff, who will soon be joining us in the east gallery.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The clock has expired. The government made [*inaudible*] let them live by it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That is a point of order, but the Speaker is about to overrule that point of order because he has a number of introductions that he has to make as well.

On behalf of the member for Markham–Unionville and page Soumiya Suresh, we'd like to welcome her mother, Chitra Suresh; her father, Suresh Muthulingam; her grandmother Gowri Sabapathy; grandmother Sathimalar Muthulingam; and grandfather Palaniyappan Muthulingam, to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd like to welcome the grade 9 students seated in the Speaker's gallery, who are taking part in the Ontario Legislative Assembly's take your grade 9 student to work day. They are Kasia Babiarz, Clarise Bunsee, Megan Fernandez, Christian Sziraky, Derek Kleperis, Jensen Chadee, Keegan MacInnis, Jhenelle Christopher, Zoe Lofft, Patrick Farnan, Bryn Martin, Rizelle Menzano, Kayla Mullner, Alexander Theriault and Jessica Sousa. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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Grade 9 students who are here today for Take Our Kids to Work Day in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat are seated in the public galleries.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome a former student employee in my constituency office, Kirk Perrin. Kirk is visiting Queen's Park today with some of his fellow brothers from Delta Upsilon Fraternity, University of Guelph chapter. They are Lane Gambta, Dan Konieczny, Scott Sickie and Rajiv Aeri. Welcome to Queen's Park.

BIRTHDAY OF DEPUTY CLERK

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in congratulating our Deputy Clerk, Todd Decker, as he celebrates his 50th birthday today.

REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2008-09 annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to wish the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, Toby Barrett, a happy birthday today as well.

VISITOR

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to welcome in the House today Celeste Yim, who is a grade 9 student. She is following me today from the Toronto French School. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): For anyone who has not been introduced, welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: To the Acting Premier: November 3 is an historic and sad day in Ontario history because it is the second anniversary of Premier McGuinty turning Ontario into a have-not province and, quite frankly, as a consequence turning Ontario families into have-not households.

When Premier McGuinty looked for the welfare of the federal government for the first time, he took in \$347 million in equalization payments. This year, he has now taken in \$972 million in equalization payments. The bottom line: Our dependency on the welfare rolls of Confederation has tripled.

Minister, doesn't this show it's time for a change here in Ontario when we're getting deeper and deeper on the welfare rolls?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's time for a change in the equalization formula that penalizes Ontario.

Instead of standing up for Ontario, he chooses to trash our economy, in spite of the fact that it's growing faster than any other provincial economy, in spite of the fact that 90% of our jobs are back. Instead of defending an equation that takes \$5 billion from us and gives us back \$900 million, why doesn't he speak to Harper, why doesn't he speak to Flaherty, get that formula changed and stand up for Ontario instead of trashing this great province that we're putting back on its feet?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Only the Ontario Liberal Party would give themselves a standing ovation for turning Ontario into a have-not province.

Let me put this into perspective, Minister: Never in the history of our great country has Ontario been on the receiving end of equalization payments. Premier McGuinty's policies, his failed economic policies, have put us on the welfare rolls of Confederation, and now our welfare cheque has tripled under your watch. But you continue with your reckless spending, your failed McGuinty economic policies, and you're digging Ontario families deeper and deeper into debt and chasing jobs out of our province. The reality is, our welfare payments from the federal government have tripled.

Minister, I ask you: Why are the other provinces doing better and Ontario falling further and further behind?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, factually, the member opposite's wrong: Ontario qualified in 1977, 1978 and 1981. It's just that the federal government of the day and the Davis provincial government agreed that the formula was so out of whack that it ought to be changed, and they changed it.

When we speak of equalization, Ontario has contributed some \$50 billion over the last 10 years. We are getting some of our money back. But it is time that the federal government look at that formula. That's something that has been called upon by many leading economists because they understand what it does: It takes money from Ontario, redistributes it to the rest of the country and gives us a few crumbs back.

It's about standing up for Ontario. It is about building a stronger country. When a formula prejudices an economy like this, it's bad for Canada. We want to work together for a better—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think Ontario families rightly would expect a Premier and a finance minister to say that it's not acceptable that Ontario is on the welfare rolls of Confederation, to come up with a plan to grow our economy, to move us forward as a lead province in Confederation again. But all we get from the minister is more excuses, and he puts his hand out for more and more welfare payments from the federal government. It's time for a change in Ontario to grow jobs and move our province forward.

Minister, your greedy HST tax grab is killing jobs, not creating them. You've made us more dependent on federal welfare, and you still cannot make ends meet. You've taken the over billion dollars in federal handouts and washed them down the drain in the eHealth scandal alone.

I ask the minister: Where did the money go? What have you done with the federal transfer payments now that we're further and further in debt?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What needs to be changed is a formula that penalizes the people of Ontario. The member opposite asked where the money goes. The money goes to 10,000 new nurses. It goes to five million Ontarians who now have electronic health records. It goes to 20,000 new spaces in post-secondary education.

We look forward to the day when that formula is changed, because Ontario contributes mightily to this Confederation; Ontario is vital to this Confederation. And just to show you how crazy this formula is, more than 80% of Ontarians aren't receiving. It makes no sense; most economists say that. The only people that don't get it are them, and that's because they'd rather protect the Harper government than protect the people of Ontario.

I challenge you: Stand up for Ontario. Stand up for fairness in transfers among and between all of the provinces in this Confederation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East does not need to encourage the government side.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier, on the same topic: The minister reminds me of the student who gets a failed report card and blames the report card instead of pulling up his socks and working harder. You seem satisfied that Ontario is a laggard in Confederation. Ontario families, the Ontario PCs, want Ontario to be a leader in Canada again, and number one in job creation.

Minister, you know what you did with the federal welfare payments: You blew it. You flushed it down the drain in your failed economic plan. Expenses and sweetheart deals handed out at eHealth, eHealth 2.0, Cancer Care Ontario, the LHINs—I could go on and on—one OLG scandal after another: all told, some \$3.7 billion in waste that is now saddled on the backs of Ontario families.

Minister, why have you turned Ontario families into have-not households when you made Ontario a have-not province?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Royal Bank of Canada published the following in June of this year: "Ontario's economy entered 2010 with renewed vigour, carrying its strongest momentum in almost six years.... This impressive start to 2010 implies greater strength overall this year than earlier believed...."

The Conference Board of Canada says the recovery is definitely under way in Ontario, and Ontario's economic rebound will be supported by the public fiscal stimulus spending of its government.

I agree that we need to change the equalization formula. I believe that it's wrong for Ontario, as do a range of economists. I believe there has to be a better formula for Confederation. Ontario wants to continue to contribute, as we do today.

But I'll tell you something: The people of Ontario expect their Legislature and their legislators to stand up for the interests of Ontario against the federal government, which refuses to change that formula.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Ontario PCs each and every day are standing up for Ontario families to fight back against your HST, to fight back against your hydro increases, to fight back against your eco taxes.

Minister, do some quick math. If you take your \$3.7 billion in McGuinty government waste, that works out to \$822 for each and every home in our province.

Minister, you took the federal transfers, you wasted them, and now our welfare payments have tripled. If you'd taken control of your reckless spending at the first sign of trouble, when then-Minister Colle handed out those grants based on who was closest to the Liberal

Party and made the world's richest cricket club, if you'd stopped it then, you could have stopped eHealth. You could have stopped the OLG scandals. You could have stopped the MPAC scandals. You could have stopped the scandals at the LHIN. Why don't you understand that Ontario families are saying, "Enough is enough"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We on this side of the House believe that investments in health care, education and a cleaner environment are in fact the right investments to make.

That member and his party compared nurses to hula hoop workers; we think they're vital to a healthy and vibrant society.

That member and his party want dirty air for our kids and will reopen coal plants, raise the price of electricity and not invest what we need in transmission. We disagree. We think those are important investments.

We believe that there were far too many kids out of school for far too long when that member and his party were in power. We believe in investing in schools, in full-day learning, in a better and brighter future for our children.

The people of Ontario believe in those principles as well, sir, and we'll continue to defend those public services against people who want to cut, cut, cut.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Frankly, with that kind of answer from the finance minister, no wonder Ontario is falling further and further onto the welfare rolls of Confederation.

The failed economic policies of the McGuinty government have plunged Ontario into have-not status. Your \$3.7 billion of wasteful spending on the backs of Ontario households—\$822 on each and every home and apartment in our province—means you've turned households into have-not households. You've tried to force down the eco taxes. You brought forward your greedy HST tax grab. Hydro bills are going through the roof.

Families are rightly saying, "Enough is enough." They want to see change here in the province of Ontario, but instead, you're putting us deeper on the welfare rolls of Confederation.

Why don't you put a stop to your sweetheart deals? Give Ontario families the break that they deserve and make Ontario once again a leader, not a laggard, in Confederation.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition just said he thinks Ontario is falling apart. We don't believe that at all.

We don't believe that investing in public services, the jobs that are being created, that a plus-3%—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members from Simcoe—Grey, Halton, Nepean—Carleton and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We believe that investments in our communities, in our schools, in our health care and in a cleaner environment are appropriate investments. We have cut the province's deficit from its high in just one year, which is more than I can say for other governments.

On a final point, since we're talking about fairness in Confederation, why wouldn't that member and his party explain why unemployed Ontarians don't get anywhere near the benefits that other unemployed Canadians do? Instead of accusing Ontarians and saying that Ontario is falling apart, stand up for Ontario, for a better future for our children and for fairness from our federal government.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Acting Premier. Should publicly owned utilities or, for that matter, any other publicly run organization be forced to make a political donation to gain access to their provincial government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, and I don't think anybody is.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Paying for access is exactly what has been happening. In a letter sent yesterday to a concerned hydro ratepayer, the president of Newmarket Hydro wrote: "Newmarket Hydro does not intentionally support any political party through donations or otherwise...."

"The cost of these tickets was treated as a donation by the government of the day...."

"But ... attendance at these functions was viewed as essential to best understand the government's policy objectives in this regard."

Why were public utilities forced to pay the Liberal Party to find out what this government is up to?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I might ask the member, then—because, you know, the more we dig, the more we find, and it's always very interesting.

I wonder why the member opposite wouldn't have disclosed what I'm about to disclose. That party took from Wasaya Airways, according to their own website, 100% owned by several First Nations bands, \$6,000 to the NDP central party coffers and \$1,000 to the Kenora—Rainy River riding association.

It's unfortunate that they continue to insist on a double standard, one where they try to hold us to account for things they do. Mr. Speaker—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Those kinds of donations are questionable and draw into question the integrity of all of these questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're not telling the truth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. Paul Miller: Okay, I withdraw. He's not telling the truth; he's stretching it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker can read lips.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I think the only thing the finance minister doesn't understand is what he is in fact doing and how he is perpetrating this on the people of this province.

The CEO of Sudbury hydro said he didn't even know his utility had made a political donation. In fact, he says they have a policy against it. He explains, "The total cost of the ticket for the dinner ... was considered, we know now, to be a political donation."

Why were public utilities forced to fork over public money to Ontario Liberal fundraisers just to find out about the McGuinty government's policy plans?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Why would the NDP have taken \$1,200 from Five Nations Energy Inc., a non-profit utility?

They can pretend that this isn't on the public record. They can pretend that none of this has happened to them, but we know it; it's on the public record.

This government has brought forward more initiatives on transparency and accountability, which I will recount in later questions. I challenge that member and his party, if they feel that strongly, to give back that money they received.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Michael Prue: Again to the Acting Premier: The president of Essex Power didn't know about his utility's donation, either. He told the press, "We are not aware of that donation ... we did attend what they call the heritage dinner. We were there to ensure ... that there was a long-term commitment" for those projects that they were working on locally.

Why do the people running our public utilities think the only way they can get things done is by giving money to the Ontario Liberal Party?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, they give money to the NDP and they give money to the Conservatives. It is a matter of public record.

We have brought forward a number of amendments over time to strengthen the accountability, including on-line disclosure in real time of contributions, which we think makes a really important contribution to more accountability and more transparency. The only people who haven't been accountable and transparent in this are the NDP, who have refused to disclose their own donations that have been received over the years.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister's answers are flimsy, absolutely flimsy at best. Public utilities are supposed to be owned by the people and accountable to those people, and so is this government. When public bodies feel they have to pay tribute to the ruling party just to get things done, there is something terribly wrong in Ontario.

Does the minister really think it's okay for the Liberal Party to collect money from publicly owned utilities that have a policy against political donations?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would ask the same of the third party, because they've been doing it. There are all kinds of opportunities for us to provide for enhanced transparency and accountability, which we've done. It's important that all members and all parties in the Legislature speak fully and frankly about their own fundraising activities. It's important, I think, that all of us continue to focus on improved transparency and accountability to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: The Liberal Party has been caught with its hands in the cookie jar, and the minister is desperately trying to rationalize what is happening here. But people across this province are losing faith in the political system and especially with this government.

Instead of defending this as politics as usual, the government can fix the problem. Will the McGuinty government commit to real political finance reform, follow the lead of other provinces and the federal government, and ban corporate and union donations entirely so you'll have nothing more to explain?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, then, maybe the member opposite would like to explain this invitation that was received by all kinds of people across Ontario to the NDP Leaders' Levee, where a leader event sponsor has to pay \$9,300, and you can be a friend of the leader if you pay \$4,500. Now, that's probably a good deal, because they get both Andrea Horwath and Jack Layton. The member opposite pontificates about the welfare diet; you should see the menu on here. I don't think it's part of the welfare diet: beef carpaccio, walnut toast gorgonzola, tomato coulis, panko-crusted fried brie.

It's hard to say any more. They say one thing; they do another. Start living the creed over there and stop being so phony.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Acting Premier. The \$822 per household that Premier McGuinty made Ontario families pay for his expensive experiments, waste and scandal is only the tip of the iceberg. Since Premier McGuinty turned Ontario into a have-not province two years ago, he has failed to deliver public sector wage restraint as promised. He shut down development of half of northern Ontario's land base. He has failed to fix the problems at eHealth. He is turning Ontario fam-

ilies into have-not households that pay billions of dollars for his reckless spending and boondoggles. What makes you think Ontario families have an unlimited ability to pay for your wasteful scandals and expensive experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The people of Ontario wanted us to invest in health care; they wanted more nurses in their hospitals; they wanted more doctors. They wanted us to undo the damage that that party left in our health care system. They wanted us to invest in education because, unlike the Conservatives who think that full-day learning is a frill, we think it's essential for a vibrant future of this province and our children.

This party has invested in a cleaner environment and a safer environment, as well as investing in leaving a legacy around our public forests and our public lands that our children and grandchildren will thank us for. It's about having a balanced view, it's about fixing the things that went wrong when that party was in power, and most importantly, it's about a better future for our children and grandchildren.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again to the Acting Premier: Premier McGuinty leaves no stone unturned in looking for families to pay for his reckless spending on sweetheart deals and waste at eHealth and OLG scandals and subsidies to Ubisoft, Samsung and the Chevy Volt. It's bad enough that Premier McGuinty's HST, health tax, and income and property tax hikes turn Ontario families into have-not households. With equalization, he has found a way for families in Newfoundland and British Columbia to foot the bill too. What makes you think families in St. John's and Victoria have an unlimited ability to pay for your reckless spending?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We don't think investing in a better education system for our children is reckless. What is reckless is his party promising to cut \$2,300 per Ontarian from health care with their \$3-billion health care cut. That's what they're about. They want to go back to the days of Premier Mike Harris. They want to go back to a time that all Ontarians rejected in 2003 and 2007. It's about building a better and brighter future for our kids. That involves the prudent management of finances, as well as investing in health care and education and a cleaner environment. That's what the people of Ontario want, that's what they voted for in 2007, and that's what we will continue to deliver.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Ontario Power Generation is wholly owned by the government of Ontario. The Minister of Energy meets regularly with the OPG board. Is the minister aware that OPG transferred ownership of 32 radioactive steam generators to Bruce Power last year, and can he please tell us why this transfer of ownership took place?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. Once again, I guess we have the NDP up here

trying to raise concerns about nuclear power here in this province. I think the problem is that they don't realize just how important nuclear power is to this province.

Every transaction that takes place in that industry is highly regulated by the federal government. Every decision that is made in the nuclear industry is subject to the utmost of scrutiny to ensure that public safety is being taken into full consideration. It's time for the NDP to recognize that this province requires nuclear power; it's the backbone of our energy sector. Instead of constantly trying to dump on it and suggest that somehow or another they can come up with another alternative, they should recognize the importance of the nuclear industry in Ontario and the hundreds of thousands of jobs across this country that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's very clear that the minister doesn't like this question at all. OPG was responsible for the management of low- and intermediate-level nuclear waste in Ontario until last October, when, according to this report, OPG transferred possession and title of the Bruce A radioactive steam generators to Bruce Power.

Now, could the minister tell us, did OPG transfer ownership to Bruce Power because OPG is not allowed to export radioactive waste—maybe you are familiar with that—or is it because the McGuinty government wanted to distance itself from the dangerous and now widely opposed decision to ship the generators across the Great Lakes? Which was it?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm really getting tired of the NDP trying to have it both ways on nuclear power. The fact of the matter is, this is the backbone of our energy system. The NDP pretends that somehow or another we can run an energy system in this province that provides power to Ontario families and provides reliable power to our businesses without this industry. This is a highly regulated industry. Everything from nuclear waste to radiation issues to safety issues are all highly regulated and administered through the federal government.

We can always provide assurances to Ontarians. I will not for a second entertain the suggestion that in any way people are at risk as a result of the work that goes on in this industry. There are thousands of Ontarians who depend on their jobs in the nuclear industry. It's safe, it's clean, it's reliable and it's an important part of our energy mix.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, as you and many members know, November is Adoption Awareness Month. It is a welcome opportunity to recognize families that have adopted children and given them permanent, loving families. It is also a time to think of the children who are in need of permanent, loving families and the

families that are ready and willing to welcome those children.

Minister, we know children's aid societies across the province currently have children in care who are looking for loving and stable permanent homes. Can you please explain what our government is doing to support these children as they look for families in our communities?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his advocacy on behalf of families in his community, because that's exactly what this is about. This is about best outcomes for kids and helping kids find families. It's a privilege in my role to have been able to sit down with many of our youth in care who talk about their dream and aspiration of finding a forever family.

I'm very pleased to share with the House much of the work that's been done in the sector to find permanency options for kids in the last year.

Under our government, the number of adoptions has increased by 62%. Completed adoptions through children's aid societies have increased in the last year by 21%.

I recently had the chance to attend the Adoption Resource Exchange, where CASs from around the province came together to demonstrate and show the kids who would be available, to encourage families to think perhaps beyond the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It's heartening to hear that there is an improvement in adoption numbers and that children's aid societies are working together to find homes for kids. The minister mentioned improvements to the child welfare system through the work of the Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare. Members have been hearing that some children's aid societies are facing financial challenges, while many children's aid societies have balanced budgets and are taking innovative steps to make sure money is best spent on supporting children and families.

I know that the Ottawa children's aid society has a balanced budget and I'm very pleased to have a productive and positive relationship with them. Could the minister share with the House some of the innovative practices taking place at the Ottawa children's aid society that her ministry has observed?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The Ottawa CAS is doing great work. They are developing innovative solutions to find approaches to spend less time on paperwork and more time on kids, to find families, to reach out, to recruit families that might like to adopt kids.

Innovation is all about finding a pathway to sustainability. We're looking at a range of permanency options—legal custody, customary care, supporting families to be able to look after their own children. There are so many pathways to find permanent families and permanent homes for kids. The Commission to Promote Sustainable Child Welfare is doing much of this work.

We look forward to working with CASs like the Ottawa CAS to learn from their best practices and continue to do this important work to find families for Ontario's kids and give them the very best outcomes that they can have. It's all of our collective aspirations and it's good work being done in Ottawa.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. This government is so out of touch that even a lob ball question from the member from Willowdale went unanswered and was bungled last week.

Last Thursday, the member from Willowdale—and I'll refresh your memory—asked the minister to clarify how HST affects Ontarians when they're purchasing a home. The minister, in response, did not say a word about how Ontario families are being forced to pay more for real estate commissions, legal fees, home inspections, movers, leases, high-ratio mortgages, natural gas, hydro and Internet access fees that now apply to them.

The question is very simple to this minister: Was your omission of all of the ways Premier McGuinty's greedy HST tax grab affects Ontarians deliberate or were you negligent?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm so glad to be able to answer a question about the HST. But there was something that was said in the House that gives me great concern. In fact, it was our Minister of Finance who said that this party is going to cut \$2,300 per person in the province of Ontario. Why are you going to be cutting that much in health care? That's the real question today.

When we talk about the HST, we're talking about \$47 billion in investment in our province. We're talking about 600,000 jobs for Ontarians—

Interjection.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: It really is.

I wonder if she's had an opportunity to speak to the MP in Nepean—Carleton and why he voted for the HST.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to invite Alice out of Wonderland to come over here to the real world, because that was actually embarrassing. She has no grasp of her file.

But poor member from Willowdale, when he was co-opted for a staged softball question last week—how could the minister do a bait-and-switch on him? I'm not sure how the minister can even call that an answer to a question.

The reality is, we want to know what the broad impact of the HST is, and that's what the member from Willowdale wanted. It's the kind of treatment, quite frankly, he received that we would expect on this side of the House. It's usually meant that a backbencher is going to get an answer to his lob ball question.

The question we have now: Was the minister punishing the member from Willowdale for pulling a Sarah Palin and going rogue with his HST question or is it now that the McGuinty Liberals don't want to answer any-

one's questions in the leadup to the next election because they have no answers?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, let me say that the member from Willowdale is doing an incredible job for the people of Ontario—absolutely. He's such a great member.

Here's the answer to her question: I really think that—*Interjection.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Nepean, you just asked the question. You know the rules: If you're not satisfied with the answer, you can call for a late show.

Minister.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I just would really ask the member if she's had the opportunity to thank her former boss, Mr. John Baird, who in fact supports the HST.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr. Peter Kormos: Once again, to the Deputy Premier: Yesterday, Ontario's insurance brokers joined a chorus of consumer and anti-poverty groups in demanding an end to the use of credit scores in the home insurance industry. They cited numerous examples of premium increases of 50%, 75% and even 100% because of the use of this profoundly unfair practice.

Why won't this government listen to the insurance brokers, to the consumers' groups, to the anti-poverty groups, and ban the use of credit scores in the home insurance industry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll remind the member opposite that this government has, in fact, banned the use of credit scores in areas where we have complete jurisdiction. In 2005, we took action: We banned the use of credit scores on auto insurance. In our most recent reforms, we have strengthened that prohibition.

We eliminated backdoor uses of credit scores when it comes to quoting rates for a consumer. Going forward, we'll continue to monitor the use of credit scores in other areas of insurance, such as personal property. FSCO is engaged in discussions with other insurance regulators across Canada, and it's important, just like our five-year review, that we maintain a balanced approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: If the use of credit scores for determining premiums is unfair for drivers, why isn't it unfair for homeowners? It's not just brokers, consumers' groups and anti-poverty groups that want credit scores banned; even The Dominion and Wawanesa have said that it's time for credit scores to go. Other provinces have banned them, and the minister acknowledges that they've banned in Ontario the use of credit scores for auto insurance.

People in Ontario are hurting. Why does this government continue to side with the most reactionary elements of the insurance industry by refusing to ban credit scores in the home insurance industry?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have worked with other regulators across the country on this important issue.

What I would remind the people of Ontario, that the member opposite neglects to tell them, is that by following this policy, in fact people with good credit scores would see their premiums go up.

So in terms of implementation, we have to be very careful how we do it. We have to make sure we get it right. That's why we're working with other jurisdictions, because we're not the sole regulator in this matter.

1120

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, as I'm sure you're aware, most of our colleges were built 20 to 35 years ago. Since then, of course, not only has the labour market changed, but so have the technical requirements for the jobs which have emerged. College graduates are now expected to have a good understanding and practical knowledge of control software and high-tech equipment so that they can enter the job market confident that they have the skills and knowledge that employers are looking for.

Can you please tell me what colleges are doing to prepare our students with the relevant skills to make them excellent candidates in today's competitive economy?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. She raises a very, very important point. We can't train our college students for the jobs of tomorrow on yesterday's equipment. That's why our government has made updating the equipment in our college system a priority. We announced a three-year, \$60-million fund, of which \$10 million was flowed this year to help Ontario's 24 publicly funded colleges upgrade equipment and purchase new technology.

The types of things colleges can use this funding for include computers for classroom use, software for teaching purposes, books or electronic materials for libraries, specialized equipment or machinery for use in labs and classrooms, tools for use in shops, such as plumbing or electrical, materials to support additional classroom space or new programs, and equipment to help accommodate students with disabilities.

This is an important part of our Open Ontario plan and an important investment for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I've noticed a significant difference within the last 10 to 15 years, as most students I speak to now talk about how much technology is part of their everyday learning. I'm happy to hear that our government recognizes that this is where our economy is going. Investments in new technology and equipment not only make good business sense, but ensure that the next generation of workers is qualified to participate in the new world economy.

Being from southwestern Ontario, I'd be curious to know exactly what this funding was used for at Conestoga College and other area colleges. So Minister, could

you please provide me with the details on how the CERF funding was used at colleges in my region?

Hon. John Milloy: Members may not be aware that Conestoga College has a vibrant presence in the Guelph area, and I'm happy to report on some of the investments at Conestoga. Some of the funding that flowed is helping to upgrade equipment, such as the SIM training dummies for the paramedic program, audiovisual projects for the computer engineering technology program, various wood-working equipment, and new computers for various programs in student labs, including mechanical engineering, civil engineering, architecture, journalism, and welding and broadcasting.

At Mohawk College, which is near Guelph, Ontario's investment is helping to upgrade equipment for the aircraft technician and maintenance programs, new e-learning tools for Web-based program delivery, new high-definition equipment for the television control room of the broadcasting program, and new lab equipment for various engineering programs.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Acting Premier: Over a thousand steelworkers in my area have just come out of a 10-month US Steel lockout down at the Nanticoke Lake Erie Works. And now another 1,000 steelworkers at Hamilton's Hilton Works are reading, in "US Steel Lockout Countdown," this report: "The blast furnace in Hamilton will never reopen."

Ontario taxpayers doled out \$150 million during Stelco's bankruptcy protection before US Steel received federal approval for a takeover—a takeover based on job and steel production commitments that have not been met. Acting Premier, what steps have you taken to ensure these commitments and the Ontario jobs that they protect are maintained?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I agree with the member citing the challenges associated for those families that are faced with this. That's why, in 2006, we came forward with a package to protect their pensions; that member and his party voted against it. Our government continues to be in touch with the appropriate people in this situation, and we will continue to work to find the solution.

This is a troubled industry. We're seeing closures in the United States, in places like Michigan and Wisconsin.

We will continue to work with the federal government and others who have an interest in ensuring that as many of these jobs as possible are protected in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Acting Premier, this game has gone on too long. The lockout down at Nanticoke's Heckett has gone on for 18 months. I don't think your government has done anything. A lockout may permanently close the Hilton works' blast furnace and end 100 years of steelmaking. Families will again be split, as you've recognized. Steelworkers will again lose their homes.

Primary industry has historically provided tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario. Are you preparing to wave goodbye to yet another industrial heavyweight? Do you have any plan at all for primary industry, or are you just making this up, crisis by crisis?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We all feel that it is very unfortunate when these types of situations disrupt the lives of those workers, their families and the communities. But I can say that this government has been working 100%, rolling up its sleeves, through the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, through the Minister of Finance, through our Premier, through leadership and through the Ministry of Labour. We have our most seasoned, skilled, professional mediators there, working with the parties.

When the member says it's all over, we don't agree. We don't agree with that. We continue to be there at the table, continuing to assist, to keep the dialogue open. If there is any chance or hope of keeping the plant going, of assisting those workers, we will be there for those workers.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you would know that under the Conservative government, we went the way of privatizing winter road maintenance. We know that it's more expensive to do so, and we know that the standard when it comes to winter road maintenance has been lessened.

We now learn that another contract has been issued by MTO to privatize winter road maintenance in the northeast. Why are you going forward with the privatization initiative that was started by the Conservatives if you know it doesn't save money and that the standards are less?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, the standards are not lessened. In fact, the standards are kept high. As I have said many times in this House, we have among the safest roads in North America, and that's a standard that we will continue to uphold.

We obviously work with the regional offices to make sure that the oversight of those contracts is in place. I have visited the regional offices and I know that it's a real concern of theirs.

The fact is that road maintenance can be done in a variety of ways. This method is what's in place in the province, and we've kept the standards very high, using it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it's quite interesting, because you were opposed to the privatization of winter road maintenance when you were in opposition. Now that you're the government, you've put the pedal to the metal and you've accelerated it.

In the case of this particular contract in the northeast, we're also, at the Ministry of Transport, going to lose the ability to do what are called patrols; in other words, the people who dispatch where the plows have got to be on

the highway at various times of the day, depending on the conditions. It's not going to be done by MTO but by the contractor.

I ask you again: Why would you do something like this when you know, at the end of the day, that you're not going to save money, quality is going to go down and safety is in question?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We wouldn't be doing this if safety were at question. We wouldn't be doing it if quality was going to go down.

One of the first visits I made was to the northern regional office. I had a conversation with folks about the oversight of these maintenance contracts. That oversight is in place. We monitor it very carefully.

I think the other thing that the member opposite needs to know is that we have made record investments in northern highways. In 2010-11, we are investing \$774 million in northern highways. That is an unforeseen amount. There is construction and work and maintenance going on all over the north.

I take the member's concern seriously that we have to make sure that oversight is in place. We're doing that. We have to make sure that the MTO offices know what's going on in road maintenance. We're doing that. The standards are high. We will keep them high and we will keep the quality in place.

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Labour. November 12 will mark the anniversary of a terrible tragedy that no one wants to see repeated again. Lori Dupont, a nurse, was stabbed to death while on the job. Although five years have passed since her death, Lori Dupont's legacy is still strong in the hearts of her family and co-workers.

Everyone has the right to a safe workplace, free from fear or violence. Minister, can you please explain what your ministry has done to help make Ontario workplaces safer?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I know how deeply affected the member and his community have been by the murder of Lori Dupont. That murder of Lori Dupont focused our attention yet again on the effects of workplace violence on the individual, on the family, on the community, and our thoughts and prayers are with the Dupont family today.

Our government takes violence and harassment in the workplace very seriously. That's why we amended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to address workplace violence and harassment. Employers are now required by law to develop policies and programs to help prevent things like what happened to Lori Dupont from happening again. Today, workers have the right to refuse work if they feel that they are physically at risk of violence in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Pat Hoy: Like so many others, in 1996, my community lost Theresa Vince, a wife, a mother and grandmother, to a tragedy at the hands of her workplace supervisor.

Workplace violence is a complicated matter, one that deserves attention and action. Minister, I know that your ministry has undertaken a number of proactive initiatives to educate workers and employers about these new requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Can you speak to these many initiatives?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member for allowing me to address some of the resources that have been developed by our health and safety partners for violence and harassment in the workplace. We're getting the message out. Workers and employers can find resources and materials on the ministry's website, and this includes an informational video. I'll let you know that this informational video we have on our website—we have a number of them—is the video that is most sought after, is most viewed, and was posted just this past June. I said before and I'll say it again: Violence and harassment have no place in Ontario's workplaces. We want to make sure that all workers go home safe and sound to their families at the end of the day, and this is exactly what this legislation does.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: The owners of the Buttonville Airport in York region announced operations will cease within five years. The airport hosts more than 170,000 flights annually, mostly corporate flights essential to the economy of the GTA. Can the minister tell us what involvement her ministry has had in the discussions that led up to the shutting down of this regional airport, and what role her ministry will have in planning for an alternative regional airport to serve the needs of the GTA?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding of the way the air network in the country works is that this is a federal issue, and this is a private operation. Having said that, I do have an air advisory panel, and I have spoken with people from around the province who are involved in the small—particularly the remote and rural—airports in the province. I know we've been involved in a pavement study on those runways and there has been a lot of work that has been done as a result of that study. I am concerned about the overall quality of the airports in the province, but on this particular issue, I believe it's the jurisdiction of another government and it's a private organization.

Mr. Frank Klees: The jurisdiction of the province of Ontario is to ensure that we have a proper transportation plan in place. That, surely, is the mandate that was given to Metrolinx. It's disconcerting to me that this issue of air transportation is to be seen nowhere in the ministry's transportation planning. In fact, one of the directors of Metrolinx, at the standing committee, admitted when I put the question to him that air transportation should, in

fact, be an integral part of the intermodal and integrated transportation system in the province. I will then put it to the minister: Will she undertake to ensure that air transportation becomes an integral part of the transportation planning process for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in my first answer, we have—in fact, a former Minister of Transportation, the member for Etobicoke Centre—set up an air advisory panel in our ministry. The member for St. Catharines kept that going.

There was, in the Ministry of Transportation, a robust air department, air unit. It was the party opposite that got rid of that unit. It was the people on the other side of the House. It seems to me that the member opposite was a Minister of Transportation, and it was under his watch that provincial involvement in air traffic and air transportation was diminished.

We have reinstated the conversation. I understand that air travel is an important part of the network, which is why I'm working with the folks who are involved in those airports around the province. But the member opposite has to take responsibility for reducing the capacity for us to do that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To the Minister of Education: Parent councils were created to enable parents to help their kids, but a study by People for Education shows that parent councils have turned into fundraising machines. The money they raise goes to basic fundamental items like textbooks and computers, things we all thought the government of Ontario should be paying for.

The Ministry of Education has pledged to craft fundraising guidelines since 2005, and we were expecting guidelines in 2010. Now they say no policy will be implemented until 2012-13.

I had no idea that writing a single set of guidelines was so onerous for the minister. Is it really that complicated?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important that I correct the honourable member that it's not about the minister writing guidelines. In fact, the ministry leads robust consultation with all of the people who are going to be impacted by fundraising activities. So I think yes, in fact, it is very important that we take the time to do this right, that we make sure that we consult and provide opportunities for families and for people in our communities to provide feedback.

I would also like to clarify that when it comes to dollars that are raised within school communities, the first issue that we have focused on is student fees, and right now the honourable member and all people in Ontario can go to the ministry website and see what we have proposed for guidelines on student fees in our schools.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Clearly, I wasn't talking about user fees, although that's an important issue too.

Given the eco fee fiasco, you might not want to bring that up.

You talk about the robust consultations. Does it really take five years to have robust consultations with the parents? How much longer do you need for robust consultation with the public? I don't get it.

Parents fundraising has become an integral part of how the Ontario government funds its schools. It has sapped the energy and resources of parents, and it's undermining public education by creating have and have-not systems. But my sense is that the minister isn't losing too much sleep about such issues. My worry is that parents are fundraising over \$600 million a year.

It's really about the money, isn't it, Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, we think that having consultations and putting guidelines on student fees—those are fees that directly impact students in our schools—should be a priority, and that is why that is the guideline that is out first. With respect to fundraising in our schools, another very important area, we will be putting out guidelines in the new year.

I think it's also important to clarify in this House that there is a great deal of fundraising that goes on in schools. What's interesting, though, is that some of that fundraising is to support and benefit other community activities like the United Way. I know that when there are disasters, in our communities and beyond our communities, there are significant fundraising efforts in our schools, which, in my view, underscores the reason why we do need to have good guidelines in place; why, when we do put our draft guidelines out there, they will be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, the people in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans are very concerned about the effects of climate change. I'm proud of Ontarians' support for Ontario ending coal generation. We are 70% towards reaching that goal. Ontario is a world leader through this action.

On another climate change initiative, it is proven that trees act as an effective sink for carbon dioxide, which we know is the leading contributor to global climate change.

Recently, I welcomed the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario to my riding to speak to high school students on the environmental issues facing the province. The commissioner has a very good grasp of those issues and a clear understanding of what needs to be done to address these environmental challenges. In a recent report, he suggested that we need to make greater effort to deliver on our commitment to plant more trees in southern Ontario.

Minister, what is the government doing to fulfill this commitment?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans. In the member's riding, there are two conservation authorities, Rideau Valley and Cataraqui, who, in partnership with Trees Ontario, have planted over 218,000 trees in this area alone.

I'm pleased to stand in this House here today to reconfirm our government's commitment to the 50-million tree program. Approximately 6,000 trees have been planted to date, and in 2010, 2.1 million seedlings were planted. We're on target to plant a total of 50 million trees by 2020. This is a vital government program, and it will be ensuring a legacy for the people of Ontario which will provide long-lasting forests which will improve the air we breathe and the water we drink, as well as improving the watersheds, whether they're urban or rural, wherever we live. These forests will protect wildlife and provide recreational opportunities and help combat global warming.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm happy to hear that we are making progress on our government's goal to plant 50 million trees in southern Ontario. This initiative is a critical step in our government's plan to slow the effects of climate change. It will have a positive impact on the environmental future of Ontario and help ensure that our children and grandchildren will breathe clean air for years to come.

I know that many people in my riding and across the province want to help us meet this ambitious goal. However, landowners need tax savings incentives made available to them in order to plant trees and manage their forests in a sustainable fashion. My question is: What is the government doing to encourage participation in the program?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, again, to the honourable member. I'm pleased to share with the House my ministry's managed forest tax incentive program. It's a voluntary program administered by MNR to provide lower property taxes to participating landowners who agree to conserve and actively manage their forests.

Under this program, participating landowners have their property reassessed and classified as a managed forest, and they're taxed at 25% of the municipal tax rate set aside for residential properties. To participate in the program, landowners must own four hectares or more of forest land. They must agree to certain conditions, including preparing and following a managed forest plan for their forest. The MNR-approved plan improves the owner's knowledge of their forest, increases the owner's participation in managing the forest and, in turn, helps encourage stewardship of Ontario's private forest.

I thank the member for the question and I thank Trees Ontario for their assistance.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his

question given by the Acting Premier concerning the US Steel lockout. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, to government notice of motion number 31.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1144 to 1149.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Sterling, Norman W.
Yakubski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad

Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Takhar, Harinder S.
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 47.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion lost.

We now have a vote on the main motion.

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion 31.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Interjections: Same vote reversed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Same vote reversed? Agreed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 47; the nays are 26.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome from my riding Madilyn Darrach and her mother, Jody. Madilyn is here attending Take Our Kids to Work Day, and her mother has joined us. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today the members of the Campaign to Control Cancer. They are here today for the Cancer Day of Action at Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Steve Clark: I felt it was important today to rise in this House and acknowledge the commitment to community demonstrated by those who ran for office in local council and school board elections last week.

I don't have to tell anyone here that putting your name on a ballot is not an easy decision. By putting forward your platform and ideas, you open yourself up to scrutiny and criticism from the public and press. The debate of those ideas is fundamental to our democracy, and without a variety of candidates and diversity of opinion, we all suffer. Whether they finished on top of the polls or somewhere farther down the list, I want every candidate to know how much their participation mattered in their municipality.

In Leeds-Grenville, as with the rest of the province, election day brought many changes. I look forward to working with every elected mayor, reeve, councillor and trustee, whether they're returning to office or new.

I congratulate newly elected Mayors Brett Todd in Prescott, Bill Sloan in Edwardsburgh/Cardinal, David Gordon in North Grenville, Herb Scott in Athens, Bruce Bryan in Leeds and the Thousand Islands, and Erika Demchuk in Gananoque.

I also applaud Mayors David Henderson in Brockville, Jim Pickard in Elizabethtown-Kitley, Ron Holman in Rideau Lakes, Bill Thake in Westport, Doug Struthers in Merrickville-Wolford, as well as Reeves Roger Haley in Front of Yonge and Mel Campbell in Augusta, for their return to office.

NON-AUTOMOBILE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Every week, over 150 people on average are hospitalized or visit emergency rooms as a

result of injuries incurred on all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles in Ontario. According to Ontario Injury Prevention, the same goes for 550 cyclists. These injuries are often severe and even debilitating, and some 1% actually die from their injuries.

Legislation concerning the use of non-automobile modes of transportation, including bicycles, motorized vehicles such as all-terrain vehicles, snowmobiles, motorized bicycles, motorcycles and scooters needs to be addressed in a comprehensive fashion.

Today, I tabled a private member's resolution that a select committee be appointed to study the use of such modes of transportation and report back to the House with recommendations as to how we can make the use of these vehicles safer for all Ontarians. In a non-partisan fashion, the select committee would look into possible age and licensing requirements, safety training, the use of protective equipment for operators and passengers, and the appropriate size of non-automobile motorized vehicle relative to the size of the operator. The membership of the committee would be composed of members from all regions of the province.

I would like to urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to vote in favour of this resolution on November 25. With your help, we can address these issues and lessen the number of injuries and fatalities from these vehicles.

NATIONAL 4-H MONTH

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today is the annual Show Your 4-H Colours day, hence the green tie. This kicks off National 4-H Month across Canada and is the day when 4-H members and supporters are encouraged to wear green to show off their support and spirit.

Since 1913, 4-H has helped to encourage well-rounded Canadian youth. With the motto of "Learn to do by doing," 4-H teaches rural youth new skills, including leadership, public speaking and responsibility.

Members have the opportunity to join clubs, travel in Canada and beyond on exchanges and earn grants and scholarships. Today in Canada, more than 26,000 youth are led by a committed group of close to 8,000 volunteer leaders. These are youth from rural Ontario who will be the next generation of farmers and rural leaders; 4-H has a strong history of supporting rural Ontario and encouraging young people to get involved in their communities.

November has historically been a very important month for 4-H groups in Ontario: It includes everything from the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair to the national 4-H conferences in Toronto. And 4-H members from across Canada have travelled to Toronto in November for the national 4-H conference for decades. It is the longest-running conference in Canada and has provided great opportunities for 4-H members to create friendships and memories that will last a lifetime.

I want to extend best wishes to all 4-H members, and I hope they have a successful 4-H month and conference.

BEYOND THE BOUNDARY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend the elite cricket community tournament hosted by an organization called Beyond the Boundary.

I would like to begin by saying how impressed I am with Beyond the Boundary. It is a not-for-profit organization, and its goal is not only to help newcomers to integrate quickly and effectively into Canadian society but also to promote youth development and foster learning, discipline and respect for others through the power of sports.

I'm pleased to say that Ontario is the only province that has a stand-alone ministry for health promotion and sport. This ministry was created to enable Ontarians to lead healthy and active lives and to make this province a healthy and prosperous province in which to live, work, play, learn and visit.

Beyond the Boundary is helping to make Ontario a better place to live and the riding of Mississauga-Brampton South an inclusive and active community.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm honoured to have in my office an additional staff member for the day, as I and many other members are entertaining students working with us for the day.

It's my pleasure to introduce Madilyn Darrach and her mother, Jody, who I introduced earlier, from Newcastle in my riding of Durham.

Madilyn is a grade 9 student from Clarke High School and is participating in Take Our Kids to Work Day. This is a Canada-wide program which offers grade 9 students the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the world of work.

1510

Madilyn is an exceptional student who is dedicated to giving generously of her time and effort to her community. This past year, she completed all 82 badges for her Girl Guide troop. But that's not all. She then moved on to earn the Lady Baden-Powell Challenge award, which is the highest honour that can be earned.

Maddy hopes to one day serve as a Supreme Court judge. Judging by her past achievements and from having lunch with her today, I expect to see her sit on the bench or perhaps even in the Legislature, replacing me.

It is my privilege to host Maddy and to thank her parents, James and Jody, for allowing her to join us today.

I hope all members take the time to meet and mentor exceptional students from their ridings as part of a great program. I encourage all youth, including the pages here today, to dream big, work hard and make our world a better place for all of us to share.

CANCER CARE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to welcome members of the Campaign to Control Cancer and the November 3, 2010, Cancer Day of Action at Queen's Park.

It's a terrible disease that at one time or another has touched everyone in this House in one way or another. Consistent and urgent effort is required by all of us to keep moving forward on prevention and early detection, treatment and access to quality patient support. I know that is a message brought forward today by volunteers with the Cancer Day of Action and by the more than 1,000 Ontario citizens who participated in community conversations on cancer across the province this year.

The Campaign to Control Cancer is working to champion a new response to cancer: more control, less cancer. In 2010, an estimated 28,200 people will die of cancer in Ontario, and 65,100 new cases will be diagnosed. We have the knowledge to cut the rate of cancer deaths by half in the next generation, and that gives me the hope and determination to work together on this challenge.

That's why we launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second-deadliest form of cancer in the country. We have invested \$193.5 million over five years to implement a colorectal screening program in Ontario. We are funding approximately 135,000 more colonoscopies over five years.

We introduced a free vaccine to protect young women against the human papillomavirus, the major cause of cervical cancer. About 77,000 females in grade 8 were offered the free vaccine to protect against the human papillomavirus, saving families up to \$450 per person—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt.

ENERGY POLICIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Where I live, and in many parts of my riding of Nickel Belt, people don't have access to services that people in the urban areas of this province take for granted. Where I live, we don't have cable TV or mail delivery. We don't have water or sewers. We don't have natural gas, sidewalks, paved roads, public transit or storm sewers. Volunteers make up our fire department. In short, in many communities in Nickel Belt there are very few services that city-dwellers take for granted. In my home, like in many communities in Nickel Belt, the only service we get is a phone line and electricity.

People throughout my riding are becoming increasingly frustrated with the frequency and duration of blackouts. They're frustrated with the quality of the electrical service, where power brownouts damage their appliances. They are doubly frustrated that while services deteriorate, they are told to pay more—much, much more. Then, on top of increased hydro rates, they get dinged with the HST.

Two weeks ago, in Mattagami First Nation, a funeral was performed indoors but in the freezing cold and in the

dark because the power was out again. This truly is an undignified way to conduct a funeral. That particular power outage lasted 21 hours.

It is not right that it should happen, and we want this government to change that.

FÉDÉRATION DE LA JEUNESSE FRANCO-ONTARIENNE

M. Phil McNeely: Je désire souligner une subvention de 15 000 \$ offerte par la Fondation franco-ontarienne à la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne.

La Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne, FESFO, a été créée en 1975 par des jeunes qui voulaient « s'assurer que la jeunesse franco-ontarienne participe pleinement au développement de sa communauté ».

Tout d'abord nommée la Fédération des élèves du secondaire franco-ontarien, la FESFO est devenue la fédération de la jeunesse afin de créer des ponts encore plus solides entre l'école et la communauté. La FESFO est l'organisme porte-parole des 25 000 jeunes francophones qui fréquentent une des 86 écoles secondaires franco-ontariennes. Plusieurs activités de la FESFO visent à faire découvrir l'identité franco-ontarienne et à combattre l'assimilation tout en outillant les jeunes leaders de tous les coins de l'Ontario.

Les Jeux franco-ontariens représentent, depuis 1994, le plus grand rassemblement annuel et provincial de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne. À chaque mois de mai, un millier de jeunes d'écoles secondaires franco-ontariennes de tous les coins de l'Ontario se rassemblent pour faire valoir leurs talents.

Des milliers de francophones de la région hôte bénéficient de cet événement dynamique grâce aux Mini-Jeux et aux 200 spectacles et performances qui sont ouverts au grand public. Plus de 16 000 heures de bénévolat sont consacrées à l'organisation de cet événement.

L'expertise de la FESFO en développement communautaire est reconnue et utilisée par des partenaires importants tels le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario, l'Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies, Patrimoine canadien et la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario.

J'invite les membres de l'Assemblée législative à se joindre à moi pour féliciter et appuyer le travail de la FESFO, l'Ontario, ses communautés francophones et des milliers de jeunes franco-ontariens.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Bill Mauro: For some time now, the leader of the NDP has been casting around innuendo about supposed improprieties as if she were simply saying, "Good morning," or "How are you doing?"

She has accused our government of transgressions of accepting money from energy companies that attended political fundraisers, when she knows there is nothing illegal about this activity, and when, in fact, the leader of

the NDP, as an individual and as the head of her party, has done the very same thing. She accepted money for her leadership campaign from energy companies, and she accepted money for their party from energy companies.

First the NDP said accepting donations from energy utilities was wrong, but then the leader of the NDP was exposed for accepting \$1,000 from Union Gas for her leadership campaign, and as a party, the NDP has accepted thousands from Enwave and from Suncor. Then the leader of the NDP tried to argue it was okay to accept money from private, not public, companies, but then it was disclosed that the NDP had accepted donations from Five Nations Energy Inc., a non-profit entity owned by First Nations communities.

The NDP leader seems to have no problem with the practice of receiving money from energy utilities, private or public, as long as the money went to her campaign or the NDP. The NDP has raked others through the mud for conduct she has no problem with when it applies to herself or her party. By doing so, she is doing a disservice to all who sit in this House and to those who might consider putting their name on a ballot.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr37, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough, in Ontario.

Your committee further recommends that the fees of the actual cost of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr37.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CELL PHONE SAFETY ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to increase cell phone safety in Ontario / Projet de loi 128, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des téléphones cellulaires en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

1520

M^{me} France Gélinas: If you allow me, I have two visitors, Mr. Bob Conley and Professor Magda Havas, who are here to witness the introduction of this bill.

This bill is very short and very simple. It requires that all cellphones sold in Ontario bear a warning label. That's it; that's all. It requires that people who sell phones in Ontario post a sign containing information about the specific absorption rate of cellphones on the back of the cellphones. It's a very simple measure to do education and help people protect themselves.

Le projet de loi est extrêmement simple. Il s'agit tout simplement d'afficher une vignette sur les cellulaires qui sont vendus en Ontario pour prévenir les gens d'un usage correct et préventif afin de se protéger de l'usage néfaste des cellulaires. C'est tout.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 54 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

DANTE DE MONTE

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Dante De Monte.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure and honour, as a member of the PC caucus, to stand in tribute to Dante Matthew De Monte, who served in this Legislature from October 17, 1967, till October 20, 1971.

Dante De Monte was born here in Toronto on May 6, 1926. He served Canada in the Second World War in the Royal Canadian Navy. He obtained his BA at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, and graduated from Osgoode Law School in 1955. He practised law in the city of Toronto for over 40 years. He served from 1963 to 1967 as vice-president of the Toronto and District Liberal Association, and then was elected in the riding of Dovercourt in the election of 1967.

I was reading some of the obituary notes for Mr. De Monte, and I'd like to talk about some of the things. In

1967, if you were elected as a member to this Legislature, it was a vastly different place than we see today. My father was a member in 1967, having been elected in 1963. I think of some of the similarities as I go through the obituary and the record of his time here, but also the record of Mr. De Monte's time beyond this Legislature as well.

He was the first person of Italian descent to be elected to this Legislature. We have had many members of the Italian community since then, and we have members serving today. He would be so proud that this Legislature, just earlier this month, passed the motion approving June as Italian Heritage Month here in Ontario. It was a co-sponsored bill by all three parties. Mr. Sergio, Mr. Shurman and Mr. Marchese sponsored it for each of their respective caucuses. I think he'd be very proud to see that, because I see from his record he was a very devoted member of the Italian community as well.

My father happened to be the first person elected to this Legislature of Polish descent, so they share a distinction in that way.

I see the De Monte family up there. I don't know who is who at this point because it is a large contingent, but I will try to address you from time to time.

He was a father of seven children. My father was a father of 14 children. At least by the basis of the parliamentary journal, at least one of your siblings was born after your father was elected to this Legislature, as one of my brothers was born after my father was elected to the Legislature. He also had a 1966 Mustang, and he talks about being a devoted family man and about piling the family into the 1966 Mustang.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just a minute. My mother had a 1968 Mustang. Of course, my father was down here in Toronto, and on a very rainy day, she piled, I'm sure, at least eight of us into a 1968 Mustang with bucket seats. You can you imagine the room there was in it. I can picture the De Monte family piling into that Mustang because I experienced it at a different level up in Barry's Bay.

Things that make us similar: My dad was an Argos fan as well, and your father was an Argos fan.

What I'm talking about is it was a different place. There was a lot of collegiality at that time. My father was a world war veteran as well, as your father was. There was a brotherhood that existed that shortened the distance between these two sets of desks in the Legislature at that time. At that time I know that many of the members of this Legislature were people who had served in the world wars and/or Korea, because that was the generation for which it was such a significant part of their lives. Your father, Mr. De Monte, was no exception to that. He served his country well. He served this Legislature well.

He was a dedicated member of the Italian community, a real community-minded man. I understand his barbecues were famous—the roast pigs and beef. He was a master of the 'cue, as they say.

I can't believe time runs so fast, and there's so many things we can't touch on. But the one thing we have, as the privilege of a member, when we get the honour of delivering a tribute to a member of the past, is that we get a little snapshot of their lives. Even though I never met Dante Matthew De Monte, I know my father had, and they were probably kindred spirits in some way because of the similarities in their lives. But you do get a sense that you do know that person just a little bit better by having the opportunity to do this. I think all of us thank you for your father's sacrifice, for your uncle's.

Talk about a family man: Look at the contingent here. It shows the respect and the love and the admiration his family had for him and, obviously, that he had for his family and his extended family. I've never seen such a contingent as we see in the Speaker's gallery today to pay tribute to a former member of the Legislature.

Thank you all for the life, the service and the compassion of Dante Matthew De Monte. Ontario is a better place because of it, and this Legislature was better because of his service.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As I listened to the member from Renfrew, I think I should rewrite my speech because I liked it so much.

I rise on behalf of Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats to pay tribute to the late Dante De Monte, who was a friend to this chamber and one of the more interesting figures in the history of this House.

All members can remember the euphoria and excitement that marked our arrival here as rookie MPPs. I certainly remember mine. I remember the tremendous fear that I experienced sitting on that side and finding it so daunting to be there, particularly as a minister.

But I think how daunting it must have been for Dante De Monte in 1967. You've got to remember there weren't too many Italian Canadians who were elected at the time. In fact, when Joe Pantalone, my friend, ran in 1980 or 1982, Italians didn't vote for him because they didn't think that we were good politicians; that others were, that Tony O'Donohue, as an Irishman, was a better politician than Joe Pantalone. Imagine how difficult it was and the tremendous excitement and accomplishment for Dante to have been elected in 1967. It's something the family should be proud of.

Regardless of which side of the House you're on, we all come with a vision and a desire to make a positive impact, and we're all full of energy to initiate meaningful change for the communities that we've been given the honour of representing. There's no doubt that our role as MPPs gives us tremendous opportunities to help improve the lives of our constituents and of all Ontarians.

1530

Again, particular to the Italian-Canadian experience—it's no different than the Polish experience in the early 1950s; we have lots of Polish Canadians in my riding, and Ukrainians as well—when we get elected as Italian Canadians, the Italian Canadians of the old stock come in

great numbers to be served by the MPP who speaks Italian, and would not go to other politicians. As soon as they elect someone who can speak their language, they line up, which is what they did with Dante, and it makes sense.

I think of the enthusiasm we bring, and how soon that enthusiasm gets tested by the immense responsibilities of the job and, frankly, the limitations of our positions. That is especially the case for those of us who are in opposition or relegated to the government backbenches. As members, we become aware of the challenge of advocating for the mosaic of voices, cultures and communities that make up our ridings. And, yes, we do our best to be a voice for all within those boundaries.

While this challenge can be seen as a rite of passage for MPPs, past or present, the challenge was magnified for pioneers like Dante De Monte. His story as a son of first-generation Canadians who worked hard to create opportunities that they didn't have captures the essence of Canadian life for so many of us.

The De Monte story is one that many of us can relate to, especially Italian Canadians, but I'm sure it's no different for the Greeks, the Polish and the Portuguese. People come from some mountainside area of my region, and immediately people follow in great numbers. I'm sure it's no different where the late Dante De Monte came from. You've got a couple of people who come and work hard, and they call thousands after them. That is the story. They worked hard, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure your parents did. All immigrants come with a desire to work hard and make a difference for themselves, their families and everyone who surrounds them.

Dante De Monte's accomplishment as the first Ontarian of Italian descent elected to this chamber is an incredible milestone in its own right, and yet it is his efforts, both in this chamber and beyond the spotlight of public life, that bring true significance to his pioneering status. De Monte recognized that he had a responsibility to build for future generations, and upon his election in 1967, he brought this perspective to the chamber, where he championed issues like citizenship, immigration and labour. Remember labour in those particular times, when there was no health and safety; whether you were underground or above ground, you worked without any health and safety. That's a challenge that I'm sure the late Mr. De Monte had to deal with as a member in this place.

He served for a short time in this House, but he continued his advocacy for Italian Canadians as a private citizen. He worked with immigration services agencies as a board member, fundraiser and organizer; helped those who travelled the same path as his parents; and set an example of public service for a generation of Italian Canadians to come. I look around this chamber, and both sides of the House are a testament to that example with the number of Italian Ontarians who have stepped into a life of public service for many of the same reasons that he did; not just Italian Canadians but so many others in this place. His life journey is a reminder of both the opportunities and responsibilities of citizenship.

Today, the Speaker's gallery is filled with his children, extended family and friends, all of whose lives have been enriched by De Monte's contribution. On behalf of the people of Ontario, and those here in this chamber, I thank you for allowing us the company of your father. His love for you mirrored his commitment to the people of our province, and I know that you understood the sacrifices he made, as indeed do all the spouses and friends of those who are here today.

Although Ontario has made incredible strides in the years since he was elected in 1967—it wasn't long ago—of the enduring legacies of De Monte's life, perhaps the one that speaks loudest is the need for us as MPPs and citizens alike to do what is necessary so that all Ontarians have opportunities to make their own contributions, regardless of whether they have recently arrived or have been here for generations.

The De Monte story is a testament to the power of opportunity. Let us do our part to ensure that others can continue writing tales of personal triumph and community success.

Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the family for being here.

Mr. Mario Sergio: On behalf of Premier McGuinty and the Liberal caucus, I rise to pay tribute to Dante De Monte. We are joined today by members of the family, friends and other relatives, but especially the children, James De Monte, John De Monte, Antoinette De Monte, Dante De Monte Jr., Cecilia De Monte-Bahr, Joan De Monte and Mary-Anne De Monte Whelan. And we have a wonderful list of grandchildren and nephews and spouses and children and lots of friends, especially the very particular friends, Alan and Norma Seymour.

Sometimes we say a lot of things in this House, but when our colleagues plagiarize our speaking, that should not be allowed, but on an occasion like this, I think it's wonderful to hear members of the House speaking on behalf of one of our former colleagues as well.

Dante was born in Toronto—he was a Torontonion—right on Symington Avenue, a particular area in the west end of our city with which I'm well familiar, because Italians—it's not that they used to congregate, but where friends and relatives would come to live. That's where they would come, and I had friends on the abutting streets, on Symington, Osler, Prescott, Uxbridge and so forth.

Dante's parents came from the northern region of Friuli. I have to say that this region perhaps sent us the best-skilled tradesmen that Italy ever sent to Canada. Dante was born in Toronto on May 6, 1926, and he passed away peacefully at our own Humber River Regional Hospital on October 23, 2009. As his parents—immigrants probably from the first wave—we could see from their very particular ingenuity and skills the first contributions that Italians made to our province here.

Dante served in the Royal Navy in the Second World War, and subsequent to that, he acquired his BA from St. Michael's College—he went to the University of Toronto—and graduated from Osgoode Law School in

1955. It was at this particular time that he established an office on Wilson Avenue, between Jane and Keele, on the south side of Wilson at Lexfield, if my memory serves me well. In my previous life, I used to have an office at Keele and Wilson. That's when I had the big pleasure of meeting Danny. I say "Danny" because he felt good with that, and because of his personality, he had acquired a tremendous circle of friends who respected him immensely.

Yes, there was a time when he was interested in politics, and from 1963 to 1967, he was the vice-president of the Toronto and District Liberal Association. In 1967, yes, he was elected a member, the first member of Italian descent, to this House.

Dante was a very dedicated community person. I remember we used to have an office—when I say "we," the Italian community—at the northwest corner of Dufferin and St. Clair: the Italian aid society. He started to work there, and his specialties were immigration, labour and citizenship cases, especially working with people coming from the region of Friuli. Friuli is in the northern part of Italy.

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He was a tremendous volunteer and community organizer. For eight years, he was the president of the Michael Power dance club, I think it was called. For the work he did there, in 1986 he received from the Sisters of St. Joseph a very special award, and one from the Basilian Fathers as well.

He was proud when he joined the Famee Furlane Club. Famee Furlane is the Friulana families, the families who come from the northern region of Italy. Later on, he changed the name to the Friuli Centre. This was one of the really wonderful things that the community did and of which Dante was very proud.

The Friuli Centre came to build a wonderful retirement building. Subsequent to that—just in the last two or three years, I believe—they built another lovely long-term-care building. Within the complex, they had one of the first and one of the best banquet and convention centres, with lots of space for their own people, especially for seniors.

This centre today is well used by the community at large for community events and fundraising, not only for the Friulani community but for everybody else. I have to say that within the centre there is one restaurant that perhaps is the only one within the city of Toronto that serves typical, original Friulani fare. If you have a chance, go and visit this place. The food is absolutely northern.

Dante was a lover of the arts, the symphony, and the Argos. Yes, he had season tickets. I think he was told by friends that he was a fixture on the Argos' bench. He would love to take his nephews and sons. Yes, he did enjoy that very much.

One of the things that he was really known for was being a good cook. His specialties were around the barbecue. One of the wonderful characteristics that he had was to use this particular wonderful skill to raise funds for schools and local organizations, especially for the

club at Baby Point. He would do porchetta; he would be roasting pigs and half-steers. Then, this passion became so deep with Dante, it would become a yearly event. Of course, this was well attended, and he would raise a lot of money for local groups and organizations.

He also used to be a member of the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association, still in existence today, which I have been part of. He was a member of the Boulevard Club.

I have to say, in conveying the deepest sympathy, that Dante was a jovial, gentle and very generous person, and I think we should remember him as such. I know that the friends and the family do.

On behalf of all members of the House, I would like to express to the children and every member of Dante's family our deepest sympathy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the family. As well, we will ensure that a copy of the DVD of today's proceedings and the Hansard are sent to you so that you have a permanent record of today.

I beg the indulgence of Hansard: I will present to Hansard the list of all the names. They will be included in the Hansard so there is that permanent record of all of you having been in attendance today.

Thank you very much for being with us.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to acknowledge November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. First recognized in Ontario in 1986 as Wife Assault Prevention Month, it was renamed in 2005 as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. This year, on its fifth anniversary, we continue to work to end all forms of woman abuse.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour rappeler que novembre est le Mois de la prévention de la violence faite aux femmes. Souligné en Ontario pour la première fois en 1986 sous le nom Mois de prévention de la violence conjugale, cet événement a été renommé Mois de la prévention de la violence faite aux femmes en 2005. Cette année marque le cinquième anniversaire de l'événement, et nous poursuivons notre travail pour mettre fin à la violence faite aux femmes.

As we work to end all forms of woman abuse in Ontario, we need to remember that the issue of violence against women crosses beyond provincial borders. In fact, it was identified as one of the most pressing concerns for women worldwide at the 1995 United Nations conference on women.

This finding should shake us all to our core. The effects of abuse on women are beyond measure and the consequences far-reaching. It robs women of their spirit, their dignity, their freedom and, in some instances, their lives.

To improve the lives of those who have been victims, we continue to build on our domestic violence action plan. We continue to draw on expert advice from the domestic violence advisory council's report to better meet the diverse needs of women and their children.

We're training more front-line workers, working with experts to reduce the risk of lethal violence against women and supporting the network of services for survivors with the Women's Centre for Social Justice. But it is also at the community and grassroots levels that Ontarians are becoming involved and helping to stop abuse against women.

Nos trois campagnes, Voisin-es, ami-es et familles, Kanawayhitowin et « Neighbours, Friends and Families » interviennent auprès de plus de 200 collectivités afin de sensibiliser les gens aux signes de la violence et à la façon de trouver des services dans leur collectivité.

The White Ribbon Campaign highlights the critical role men play in the movement to end violence against women. Launched every year on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it is the largest global effort by men who are working to end violence against women.

Men in aboriginal communities are also speaking up against woman abuse. The Kizhaay Anishinaabe Niin campaign, meaning "I am a kind man," is being implemented across Ontario by the Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres. The campaign encourages men and boys to speak out against all forms of violence against aboriginal women.

Many organizations and individuals are dedicated to ending woman abuse, and I would like to extend my sincere thanks for the tireless efforts put forward by so many. Together, we are working to stop violence against women and provide much-needed services to survivors.

It is both the bravery of survivors and listening to their stories that informs and drives us.

Ensemble, nous travaillons à faire cesser la violence faite aux femmes et à offrir aux survivantes les services dont elles ont grandement besoin. Le courage des survivantes et l'écoute de leur histoire nous informent et nous motivent à poursuivre notre travail.

As we move forward, we must continue to express a vision for a future free of violence against all women, and we must foster a culture that teaches generations to come that gender-based violence is simply not acceptable.

We must teach our daughters to insist on equality for themselves and we must educate our sons about equality towards others.

Nous ne devons jamais cesser de travailler vers l'atteinte de cet objectif de mettre un terme à la violence faite aux femmes parce qu'il s'agit de nos mères, filles, soeurs et amies, et nous leur devons cette protection car

si l'une d'entre nous n'est pas en sécurité, aucune d'entre nous ne l'est.

We must never stop working toward our goal to end violence against women, for these are our mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and we owe them this protection because if one of us is not safe, none of us is safe.

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AIR QUALITY

Hon. John Wilkinson: Two weeks ago, I had the pleasure of attending the annual meeting of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, along with my provincial, territorial and federal colleagues. I'm pleased to report to all members of the House on the historic progress that came out of that meeting.

One of the major initiatives of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment was an agreement to work together on a new comprehensive pan-Canadian approach to air management, and let me explain what that entails.

Working with all of the provinces, territories and our federal government, we will develop stringent national air quality standards and countrywide industrial emissions standards, and we will strengthen community involvement in air quality management. This will mean better, cleaner and healthier air for people right across Canada.

This approach is being welcomed by the Canadian Lung Association as a way to improve the health of millions of vulnerable Canadians. Canadians, wherever they live, will have ready access to information about the quality of the air they breathe through new public reporting, modeling and monitoring. This new comprehensive air management system will also inform future discussions with our neighbours to the south on issues concerning air quality and air pollution.

Ministry officials from each jurisdiction will finalize the major elements of the system in 2011, and we all committed to implementation that will begin in 2013 after ratification by our respective jurisdictions.

I'm proud to note that Ontario has been at the forefront in improving the air we breathe by closing coal-fired electricity plants, improving public transit and protecting green space in the greenbelt.

As well, over the past seven years our government has introduced 59 new or updated air standards, the most action in addressing air emissions in more than 30 years. And we are seeing real results. Air quality in our province has improved significantly. From 2003 to 2008, we've seen nitrogen dioxide decrease by 32%, carbon monoxide by 31% and sulphur dioxide by 26%.

We are leading by example and look forward to working with other provinces and the federal government to do what needs to be done to reduce pollution, lessen harmful air emissions and clean the air we all share.

Clean air is fundamental to healthy communities and healthy people. In 2008, the Canadian Medical Associa-

tion calculated that the cost of illness caused by air pollution topped \$8 billion annually in Canada.

In addition to the health costs, we know that bad air is bad for our economy. It affects our farms and our forests, our water, our land and our ecosystems. It affects our quality of life and our enjoyment of the outdoors, and is especially hard on the most vulnerable in our society: young children, people with health problems and the elderly.

Air pollution knows no boundaries. As well, it knows no political stripe. So we are all working across boundaries as well. Fourteen governments throughout Canada, governed by all three major political parties, have joined in common cause.

This collaborative approach to a national air management system is a positive step in the right direction. It's good for Ontario, it's good for our people, it's good for Confederation and it's good for the country that we all love, Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm honoured to respond on behalf of our member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the critic for women's issues.

The PC caucus believes firmly that every woman has the fundamental right to live free from violence and abuse. An opportunity is in the month of November to raise awareness about violence against women. Protecting women from violence and abuse is of the utmost importance to the future of Ontario. It is essential that we ensure our most vulnerable citizens have the means to live in a violence-free and abuse-free situation.

We must work diligently to provide the necessary resources and channels to afford abused women a safe and effective way to find relief. It requires a plan. It requires a strategy which is proactive in its prevention efforts and comprehensive in its response.

We must make certain that we provide abused women with the ability to leave an abusive situation, knowing that there are options available to them. This means providing for housing, counselling, legal aid and job training. Abused women are entitled to a helping hand.

The PC Party has proven its commitment to empowering women and strengthening their ability to properly respond to violence and abuse. It was our party that was pleased to introduce and pass the Domestic Violence Protection Act, and that happened in late 2000. We increased shelter funding and allocated money to create a crisis line for assaulted women, which provided access to 24/7 crisis services for abused women across our province. We provided \$5 million for an early intervention program for child witnesses of domestic violence, which helped children recover from the effects of witnessing violence in their families. We spent over \$160 million on programs and services to combat violence against women. This was an increase of 75% since 1995. We took action to ensure that the justice system treats victims

with respect and the support that they need. We increased shelter funding by \$26 million over four years, and that added 300 new shelter beds and refurbished 136 others. And \$9 million annually was provided in new funding for counselling, telephone crisis service and other shelter supports.

Abuse against women is often silent. It could be affecting our mothers, sisters, aunts and friends. It is our determination, as the PC caucus, to ensure that this government remains focused on reducing and, hopefully, one day eliminating violence and abuse against women.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for the opportunity to address the work of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Today we hear of the proposed new air quality management system, the standards across the country, to establish regionally coordinated airsheds and air zones—again, across the political boundaries of our provinces and territories.

What I find intriguing, and I don't know whether this was mentioned, is the statement from CCME that they made with regard to the need for a system to facilitate discussion with the United States with respect to, obviously, air pollution that crosses the Canada-US border. I think of the good work of Ronald Reagan and Brian Mulroney and the work they did with respect to acid rain a number of years ago down in my area. My farm is just a stone's throw from OPG Nanticoke, the coal-fired generating station, and the issue of transboundary air pollution looms large down our way. We are downwind from the Ohio Valley, as is much of southern Ontario.

Even if we were to leave all of our cars at home, even if this government was able to come up with a coal closure deadline that they actually kept—even if all these steps were taken, we would still face a 50% smog problem billowing in from the United States. Coal continues to power much of America. We're a country where 75% of us live within 100 miles of the border, and the issue of transborder smog is very significant. I think of Batchawana Bay, north of the Soo. Where does their air come from? It comes from the coal plants in Chicago.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise to address Woman Abuse Prevention Month on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath.

Certainly, the first thing I want to say is that our prayers and our support go out to all the front-line workers: those women and men who work across the city and across this province to prevent abuse; certainly people like those workers at Redwood, in my own riding, and those at Interval House, where some of us were last night.

All of the workers in the field that I've spoken to have two simple demands of this government, and they can't, for the life of them, understand why there has been no

response forthcoming. Number one, they need housing. The actual wait time in shelters has doubled during the last seven years for housing, transitional and otherwise, for women who suffer abuse. Number two, child care: We are bordered by Manitoba and Quebec—Quebec has \$7-a-day child care; Manitoba, \$17-a-day child care; Ontario, over \$1,000 a month, and only one in 10 children have access. These are the two necessities to combat abuse of women—absolutely.

1600

The other thing that I of course want to put on the table, yet again, is that on the order paper for many years now, a simple request of this government has been positioned, and that is that we have an all-party, all-woman committee to look at the issue of domestic violence and violence against women. For the life of the front-line workers and the women themselves, I cannot understand why this House is so partisan and this government is so partisan that it cannot constitute an all-woman, all-party committee to look at this very issue and to structure a response.

I leave it at that. I live in hope, as do all the women who have suffered abuse and the women and men who help them, and we hope that perhaps after October 11, there is some response.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to respond to the statement from the Minister of the Environment. I have to say, as is common, that those were fine words from the minister and, as is common, those were noble sentiments, but you should not hold your breath for results.

I had the opportunity to stand in the lobby of this Legislature when Governor Schwarzenegger, along with Premier McGuinty, talked about the incredible need to act now and act forcefully on climate change. I was at the Metro Convention Centre when Premier McGuinty announced his climate change action plan and talked about the challenge for this generation and the need to save generations to come. I don't know if the Premier could have been much more forceful in outlining the issues and the need for action.

Today we're told—not to diminish you, Mr. Minister of the Environment—by a somewhat less exalted person that action is going to be taken on air quality standards. That might have been credible, except for the fact that the McGuinty government, led by the Premier who made those fine statements, has not even met their own targets for climate change action, does not even have the process in place to meet those targets, and said that in their last climate report. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario went through the report and said they don't have the ability to meet their own targets, and said he was worried that their reliance on federal action cap and trade was a real problem, a huge vulnerability.

Those who watched television last night are well aware of what happened in the United States. The chances of a cap-and-trade system coming forward in the

States have been dramatically diminished. If we're depending on them in this province, frankly, it's time to be looking around. We have not seen the action from this government to fill the huge looming holes in their own policy.

So I say to you, I have heard fine words, noble sentiments, which, if acted on, would mean that action on air quality would have been taken in a very dramatic way. It has not happened.

With these promises, as substantial as the breath that they were carried on, I suggest that people wait and see if anything happens.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to sign it and pass it to my page, Priscile.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition which I think is identical. A petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

It's signed by many residents of my riding. I'm in agreement, will put my name thereon and send it with page Jayden.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: I have a petition with just under 8,000 signatures. I attempted to table it, but there were some difficulties. The table was wonderful in assisting, so today it is in the proper format, and I will read it.

"Whereas there is now worldwide interest in the work of Italian doctor Paolo Zamboni, who has discovered that nearly all multiple sclerosis (MS) patients tested by his team had narrowed or blocked veins. This condition is called chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, or CCSVI for short. A simple Doppler ultrasound scan diagnoses the presence of CCSVI; and

"Whereas this is a radical new approach to the cause and possible treatment of MS which is inexpensive, drug-free and relatively simple; and

"Whereas this is a real breakthrough, with the potential to benefit many young people in their 20s, 30s and 40s with families and careers, but at the present time, MS sufferers in Ontario and Canada are unable to have this procedure performed in Canada; and

"Whereas waiting several years down the line is not an option, as time is not on their side;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act now, as a matter of some urgency, to ensure that vascular scans

and follow-up treatment for all MS patients in Ontario will soon be sanctioned.”

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Priscile on her second-last day here at Queen's Park.

1610

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Nicholas.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas grandparents often become a family's first reserves in time of crisis. Grandparents act as playmates for children, role models, and family historians, mentors, and help establish self-esteem and security for children.

“One potential aspect of the divorce is the disruption or severance of the grandparents-grandchild relationship.

“Also, in cases of the death of a parent, (the maternal or paternal grandparents' child) should continue to enjoy access to their grandchildren by the living parent, as visitation and access was fully established prior to death of parent; ...

“In Canada, the issue of grandparents' rights of access to grandchildren has not been given recognition in legislation, with the exception of the provinces of Quebec, Alberta and BC. In all other provinces, grandparents may only petition the courts for rights of access as interested third parties. In the absence of a specific statute providing grandparents with legal standing to access, there are continuing difficulties in obtaining contact with grandchildren;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That grandparents have legal rights to access to visitation with their grandchildren in the event of parental divorce or death of a parent.”

I have signed this petition and give it to Marie-Josée, a wonderful page from Chatham-Kent.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mrs. Julia Munro: “Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and” the “Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review

the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature, along with hundreds of others, and give it to page Emmett.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France G  linas: I have this petition from the people of Algoma.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service ...; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury regional hospital thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ffion to bring it to the clerk.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from an old friend of mine, Joe Chambo, who lives at 1867 Cherryhill Road in Peterborough, a very nice residential area. It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll give it page Elle.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This is a petition relating to the Ontario Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. This petition has been read by others before me.

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA”—my colleague Mr. Frank Klees has put forward a resolution the petitioners support, which reads:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I have signed that petition.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Jayden.

VETERANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas with turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II; and

“Whereas we also remember and honour our present-day veterans and all who have paid the ultimate price fighting for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government declare November 11 a provincial holiday to honour our veterans of past and present; as well as all the soldiers of today who currently fight to defend our freedoms."

I'll send that down with Calder.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time for petitions has expired. The member for Burlington, I understand your point, but it's just that senior members sometimes take a little bit longer to get up.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am more than happy to defer to the senior members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Okay.

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I did have a petition. It's very important to him that this was tabled today. Maybe I didn't stand up quickly enough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): My apologies. I simply missed you. So, next time.

Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1620

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Talk about truncated speeches. I think this is the third time I have tried to get in my opening debate on this bill.

As a bit of background, this bill was introduced on April 29, 2009. Minister Bentley announced then that the government would be amending Ontario's Ticket Speculation Act. In the Legislature, the minister stated that this proposed legislation "would, if passed, help to ensure fair access to entertainment tickets."

Let me say at the outset that this legislation will not create one more ticket, nor will this legislation save people who buy tickets one thin dime. This legislation will do nothing to solve those problems.

The minister went on to say that this legislation, if passed, would prohibit "related primary and secondary ticket sellers ... from selling tickets to the same events," and that there would be fines of \$5,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations if they were to contravene this new legislation. Again, those parts of this legislation will not create any more tickets, nor will they save the purchasers of those tickets one thin dime.

There is a variety of ticket resellers out there, including online markets such as TicketsNow, Stubhub, craigslist, TicketNetwork, RazorGator and dozens, if not hundreds, of other sites that offer resale tickets. This provides consumers looking for premium or last-minute tickets with additional options when primary market tickets are no longer available.

Today, the secondary ticket market is manipulated by scalpers and ticket brokers who provide little or no protection for consumers in the area of information security or fraudulent ticket purchases. Tickets could be mass-produced—even photocopied—and sold to unsuspecting people who think they're buying a viable ticket to an event and simply have no protection against whether or not the ticket they have will indeed get them into the event they are supposedly buying the ticket for. So there's a lot of fraud in the business, and these ticket resellers, be it TicketsNow, Stubhub or craigslist, are all bona fide resellers of tickets which, through their expertise, through their programs, guarantee that people who purchase tickets through them get a legitimate ticket that will indeed give them access to the venue for which they are purchasing.

Today, the secondary ticket market is manipulated by scalpers and ticket brokers who provide little or no protection for the consumer. If you buy from a scalper on the street, it may be a legitimate ticket; it may not. So you take your chances when you buy something on the street.

This bill essentially targets one company, Ticketmaster, which also happens to own the online resale marketplace TicketsNow. Ironically, the resale marketplaces such as Stubhub, craigslist and all the others are untouched by this legislation.

Contrary to the Attorney General's assertions, this bill does virtually nothing to fix the consumer protection concerns he claims to be addressing. In fact, by targeting one of the few resale sites that is actually able to validate the authenticity of the tickets it offers, because of its connection with primary ticket sellers, the bill actually increases the risk of making the problem worse for consumers. This bill may indeed reduce competition in the resale marketplace, thereby making the situation worse for consumers.

Ontario does indeed need consumer protection legislation in this area, but this bill doesn't provide it. The proposed legislation ignores the actions of every other secondary ticket-selling site and street-side scalper while failing to address the legitimate consumer protection concerns. It would do nothing to protect consumers from price-gouging, street-level harassment or counterfeit tickets. Counterfeit tickets are a growing concern across North America, probably around the world. Those are the real problems that are facing Ontarians.

Bill 72 is based on a faulty assumption that primary ticket sellers, like Ticketmaster, divert tickets for a profit to the resale marketplace it operates. Now, that would be something. If Ticketmaster were to get a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey, which is where all this started, and they knew that this concert would sell out,

and they had an arrangement with Mr. Springsteen that they would sell these tickets at so much per—for these purposes, let's say it's \$100; they would sell these tickets for \$100 apiece. Now, they know these tickets are going to sell out, so they immediately take, if this is a 50,000-seat stadium, a number of these seats—let's say 10,000 seats—and they divert those seats to TicketsNow, and TicketsNow will sell these seats not at \$100 but perhaps at \$200 a ticket, and TicketsNow will pocket the extra \$100 to their own account. That's what this bill is supposed to prevent, so that Ticketmaster and TicketsNow can't collude in making that happen. In making that happen—if that did happen—that would be fraudulent.

In Canada there was an investigation by the Competition Bureau of Canada. That same situation that happened in New Jersey also happened in Calgary. The Competition Bureau of Canada conducted an investigation into that situation that happened in Calgary, examined Ticketmaster, examined TicketsNow's books to find out if any fraud took place, or indeed if any tickets were transferred. The result of that investigation was that they found nothing wrong. It would be a contravention of Ticketmaster's arrangement with the entertainment venue to tell sell those tickets or divert those tickets to anything but the general public. That Competition Bureau investigation, which happened between the time that this bill was introduced on April 29, 2009, and today, found that nothing was amiss.

Yet that's not enough. US authorities also investigated the New Jersey situation, and they found that Ticketmaster and TicketsNow did nothing wrong over the distribution of those tickets in New Jersey. There was no diversion between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow. So the US authorities have also confirmed that Ticketmaster is not in violation of federal consumer trade practices and that Ticketmaster does not divert tickets. That's two organizations—one, the Competition Bureau of Canada, and the second, the US authorities with the same responsibilities—that have found that Ticketmaster does not divert tickets to TicketsNow or any other organization.

The reason for this is simple: Ticketmaster Canada does not own the tickets it sells. It does not control the ticket inventory, and it does not set the price of the tickets offered through either its Ticketmaster agency nor the TicketsNow resale marketplace. Those prices are set by the convenor or by the marketplace, in the case of TicketsNow.

1630

In the words of National Post columnist Terence Corcoran, "The bill, aimed at Ticketmaster, is designed to fix a perceived problem that doesn't exist"—I hope the government is listening to this—"based on an analysis that is flawed with a law that doesn't do anything to fix the perception or respond to the flawed analysis." I think he believes that this bill is an absolute, total mess.

I would point out that how I started this debate was by saying that this bill will not create one more ticket and it will not save one consumer one thin dime. The proposed legislation could pass as-is, and Ontario consumers

would still not be protected from streetside scalpers and the majority of secondary ticket sellers that Ontarians currently have access to over the Internet. Why is the government doing nothing to address the legitimate concerns of consumers about the real Wild West of the ticket resale world? They're picking on one of the few legitimate ticket resellers, which guarantees the authenticity of the tickets they sell. This government has missed the point. They have missed the mark and they've done it badly, in this case.

The proposed legislation also fails to address issues concerning the resale of season's tickets, an important issue for not only consumers but major league sports teams across the province. Sports teams need their season's ticket holders to have the flexibility to resell tickets as part of their investment in the team.

Think about this: The Toronto Blue Jays have 90-odd home dates a year. Very few sports fans could take—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Eighty-one.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Is it 81 home dates? It's 162 games a season; that's right.

Eighty-one home dates: Very few people could make that many dates. I know you can buy different packages, but if you were a season's ticket holder and you had bought all the games, you would have difficulty reselling those without the resale marketplace. That is very important to major league teams, of which Toronto has four or five—depending on whether you count the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The industry, including major league sports teams, was not consulted. The major industries that use the Ticketmaster-type organizations and the resale ticket organizations were not consulted before the proposed legislation was introduced, and quite frankly, they are not being listened to now. The Ottawa Senators and Scotiabank Place, the arena in which they play in Kanata, have both been very vocal about this issue, as they would be, in their words, "very adversely affected." It would affect the sale of season's tickets in their venue in Ottawa, and I'm sure the government would not want that as a side effect of this legislation.

Ticketmaster provides a ticketing distribution service to the public on behalf of entertainers, promoters, sports teams and live entertainment venues, enabling the efficient and equitable distribution of tickets to the public. That's a very real and important service, to ensure that the public has easy access that they can trust and believe in when purchasing tickets to live entertainment events.

It's particularly important for the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto is the third most active live entertainment city in the world, after New York and London.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about Pembroke?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sorry, member from Pembroke: Pembroke doesn't count as in the same venue. I know they've got wonderful live entertainment there, but I won't say what the venue is—and you usually don't have to buy tickets to it.

In Toronto, you have to buy tickets to live theatre. As I say, it's the third most active live theatre city in the

world, after New York and London, and buying tickets by telephone, on the computer or on the website is a very important aspect to encourage the success and profitability of that business. These organizations should be very concerned if there's constraint to that kind of trade or if there's a lessening of competition in that segment, and this legislation could reduce that competition. I think that's something that this government should have some more consultations about. I think they should talk to some people who know how this business works. I think they should do that before they do some serious harm to the entertainment business in Ontario.

TicketsNow is an online resale marketplace through which individual and professional retailers, a.k.a. brokers, can offer the event tickets they own for resale to a consumer. If I were to buy a couple of tickets to an event, and then along comes a political opportunity or a political event which I felt it was necessary to attend on behalf of my constituents and I could no longer go to that event, I could then put the tickets on TicketsNow or on eBay or on craigslist, and they're accepted by those organizations and tested to make sure that those tickets are legitimate. When they are legitimate, they can then be resold and authenticated for the person who buys them, so when you buy those tickets, you know you're getting something that isn't counterfeit, that will get you into the event, and your money will be protected.

Ticketmaster does not divert tickets between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow. Ticketmaster Canada does not own tickets, it does not control ticket inventory and it does not set the price of any of the tickets offered through its Ticketmaster agency or its TicketsNow resale site. In the first case—Ticketmaster—the price of the tickets is set by the venue for which they're selling. If it's a Toronto Maple Leafs game, the Toronto Maple Leafs set that ticket price. If it's Mamma Mia or—what's the new one?

Mr. John O'Toole: Billy Idol.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Billy Idol or the new one—Priscilla of the desert, is it?

Interjection: Yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If it's one of those shows, those prices are set by the people who are putting on that particular production in Toronto. It might be David Merrick; it might be somebody else whom he's leasing his theatre to. But the ticket prices are not set by Ticketmaster.

Ticketmaster offers tickets for sale on their clients' behalf in a number of different ways. They sell them through the Ticketmaster website, they sell them through telephone orders, they sell them through retail partnerships and at the venue box office. These are primary sales for which the artists, teams and venues are compensated directly. Nobody selling tickets on TicketsNow receives a preferential access to tickets made available for sale on Ticketmaster. These statements are confirmed by the Competition Bureau of Canada and its counterpart in the US, who have recently conducted investigations into Ticketmaster and TicketsNow.

Ticketmaster invests heavily in consumer protection through the development of innovative technology such as paperless ticketing and is a leader in purchase information security, buyer guarantee, fraud protection and crackdowns on brokers purchasing en masse through online software robots. When a ticket for an event sells out so quickly, even though it may be limited to four or eight tickets per person buying them, quite often it's a software robot that is buying tickets at an incredibly rapid rate. Ticketmaster has developed innovative technology in order to determine whether this is happening and to shut it down, thereby making the tickets available to a wider range of individuals.

1640

Since the early 1900s, Ontario's Ticket Speculation Act has been in effect. This legislation makes it illegal for an individual or a corporation to sell tickets above the face value printed on that ticket. Currently, the law is barely enforced in Ontario. You can find people reselling tickets on any one of the ticket sites that I have mentioned, and rarely are those tickets sold at face value or below. Those tickets are almost always sold at a premium. That premium contravenes the Ticket Speculation Act, which was passed almost 100 years ago in Ontario and simply isn't enforced. Fines and arrests associated with scalping are rare, and individuals scalping tickets are commonplace in front of many sports venues, performance theatres and concert halls across the province.

It's difficult to imagine how a bill of this type can come to the House and come through the process of being developed, come through what the government talks about as being a consultative process, when so many of the people who are directly affected by this legislation have not been consulted with; when so many of the people who think that they can get more access to tickets with a piece of legislation like this haven't been told that bill will do nothing—not one thing—to improve their access to tickets.

This government has not consulted with the general public, and as such, I think this bill should be taken back. I think the government should do some serious consultation on this bill and make sure that when it goes back to this House, it protects consumers, it addresses the scalping issue, and it makes the distribution of tickets in Ontario as competitive as it can possibly be. This bill does none of that.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time, if I could, with the member for Durham, if that's all right with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton, I believe, has summarized the complete and succinct argument with respect to the issue of Ticketmaster.

The real story here is the fact that the government has been reluctant to move the bill forward, which is a good sign, from our argument presented by Mr. Chudleigh. I say that because, with his arguments, he indicated that the bill does not correct the problem. We talked about

this before, and that's why I wanted to be on the record just briefly. He described it from the point of the view of the season's ticket holder and the disadvantage it would provide in a balanced market.

What they have to do is really enforce the rules that exist today. What he said is that "too little attention was paid last week as Ontario's Attorney General did what governments do best: pander to public perception. Seems like no issue is too small and no public misconception so stupid or wrong that it cannot be answered with legislation or regulation."

It reminds me a bit of the accountability, the lobbyist registry stuff—I think it's Bill 122. The auditor comes in with a report saying that their misuse of consultants or lobbyists is costing the health care system and others—universities etc.—way too much money. The very day that the auditor's report was filed, what did they do? They introduced a bill to hopefully fix the problem. It doesn't, nor does Bill 172.

If you look at the genesis of the bill—I think it was sometime in 2009, actually, over a year ago. Now they're bringing it back for further debate. I would say that Mr. Chudleigh, the member from Halton, made an argument that we should pay some attention to.

Bill 172 is based on faulty assumptions that primary ticket sellers like Ticketmaster divert tickets for a profit to the resale market it operates. Let's repeat that. It's very important to understand. It's very subtle. It diverts tickets for a profit to the resale market it operates. Investigations by the Competition Bureau of Canada and by the United States authorities have confirmed that Ticketmaster is not in violation of federal consumer trade practices and that Ticketmaster does not divert tickets.

The idea is that they were holding off tickets to jig the price on closeout sales—if there are only a few for a very famous concert or something like that. But it doesn't presume a third party is doing that, that somebody could put that on eBay and somehow start up a business, and that's exactly what they would be doing if that were the case. The reason for this is simple: Ticketmaster Canada does not own the tickets themselves. Control of inventory or setting of the prices is through neither the Ticketmaster agency nor the TicketsNow resale market. When you see it—it was used in Mr. Chudleigh's example—the real seller, of course, would be, in the case of Toronto, the Raptors, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

I heard a really good story about how the Toronto Maple Leafs are a lot like the Titanic: They're quite splendid until they hit the ice. The Titanic sank; it hit the iceberg. I thought that was very good, because they are now headed to the bottom.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's unkind. I know I'm amongst friends here, or I'd never take a shot with Mr. Phillips there. A lot of these people are just ardent Toronto fans, and I would say that we should all try to stand up for the Leafs because they don't seem to be able to stand up themselves.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I like the Montreal Canadiens. That's Peterborough as well. But Mr. Leal is saying that Peterborough at one time was a farm team for the Montreal Canadiens. Even now, there's a great relationship of respect. But I digress.

There's always a shortage of tickets for successful events. People who are frustrated or don't anticipate a successful concert are a good example, and I think this issue really came up because of a concert that was sold out. Some people were unable to get tickets and they blamed Ticketmaster, and the next thing you know, Premier McGuinty comes out with a bill. He's going to fix the problem. It's a bit circumspect, in my view. It's a bit suspicious, when you see these things, as was the article I read first, where governments actually think they can solve the problem by simply introducing legislation, which really doesn't solve the problem.

I just wanted to make sure that if you look at this industry—and again, why the bill has been around and is now called back—I don't know why the government is doing it. I sometimes get suspicious. They had debate on this about a year ago, then it disappeared, and now it's back again.

The background on Ticketmaster and TicketsNow—it's good for the viewer in the last minute or so. Ticketmaster provides a ticketing distribution service to the public on behalf of entrepreneurial promoters, sports teams and live entertainment venues, and enables the efficient and equitable distribution of tickets to the public—a laudable goal. TicketsNow is an online resale marketplace through which individuals and performers, a.k.a. brokers, resell and can offer tickets they own for resale to customers. Regulate the current structures; enforce the rules in the current structures. That's the solution, rather than another bill and a lot more red tape, probably hiring another deputy minister to look after it.

Ticketmaster does not divert tickets to TicketsNow, and that's very important. That was the suspicion initially: that they were diverting tickets or covering up tickets as if they were reselling tickets. I have it clear from the Competition Bureau of Canada: This does not happen. Ticketmaster does not own tickets, control inventory or set the price of tickets.

I can only say this in conclusion: If you listen to the arguments put forward by the member from Halton, you'll see very clearly that he's made a very clear, convincing argument in support of not supporting Bill 172. If the government is listening, which I'm suspicious they're not, they will vote against their own bill, or at least not bring it for third reading. That's the advice from Halton—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

1650

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll be speaking to Bill 172, on behalf of New Democrats, in around eight minutes' time, using the modest one hour allowed me as the critic here with the NDP caucus.

I listened very carefully to the shared lead of the Conservative Party.

This is a bogus bill. I'm going to, with all due respect, take folks through the amendment to the Ticket Speculation Act, and I'm going to take people through the Ticket Speculation Act.

While case law on the Ticket Speculation Act wasn't easy to come by—there's a paucity of case law on the Ticket Speculation Act—I came across an interesting decision from 1967 by Justice Edson Haines in the Superior Court of Justice, called the High Court then, where he was hearing an appeal by a stated case, which is in and of itself an interesting process for an appeal—and I'll explain that, as well. Perhaps the parliamentary assistant, who I say has been very reliable in the process of this bill, as usual, might complain to me that some of the commentary in there is obiter; I'll argue that it is not. Justice Haines, back in 1967, said some interesting things about the Ticket Speculation Act that in fact undermine Bill 172 and its goal.

I'm also incredibly interested in the real world, what's going on out there, and as you know, the Conservative lead spoke to that to a large extent. I'm going to be able to speak to that a little bit more.

I just find this a very curious bill. Of course, it's 18 months old now. There was no urgency a year and a half ago. There seems to be no real urgency now.

The bill should go to committee because I'm sure there are things people have to say.

I'll be speaking shortly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me just say in regard to the comments made at length by the member for Halton and, to a lesser extent, by the member from Welland, although we'll hear from him at length shortly—I listened carefully to the member for Halton, and absent in his remarks, absent in his thinking about this issue, is any notion of consumer protection. That, at its core, at its heart, is what this bill is about: consumer protection.

It's a very, very tough economy out there, and the good citizens of Ontario have to spend their entertainment dollars wisely. What can potentially happen is that an agency gets the corner on a block of tickets, advertises them and creates the impression that there's an unlimited number of tickets available, and what they've really done is they've held back a smaller number of those tickets and given the rest to an arm's-length agency of theirs that resells them at a higher price. So we have this advertisement that goes out there that says there's a big event with lots of tickets available, and the people call in—"Sorry, those tickets have all been snapped up." The people are forced on to this secondary market and pay a substantially higher price. That's not fair for the consumer. It's particularly not fair for the consumer in these tough economic times when they have to choose where to spend their economic dollars carefully.

What this legislation does as a piece of consumer protection is it creates a level playing field so that there's

a fair price for a fair ticket that has been advertised at that particular price. There's—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm pleased to comment on the debate of the member from Durham and the member from Halton.

We presently have an act that would do away with scalping, and that act is not enforced by this government. Why is this bill even before this House? Why is this House spending hours and hours and hours on a bill that really is doing very little? It certainly is not in any way protecting the consumer. Why are we spending the time of this House? We're talking about thousands and thousands of dollars being spent in the time of this House when there are so many problems out there. I have constituents who can no longer afford to pay their hydro bills. I have constituents who find that shopping for groceries is becoming impossible; they cannot feed their families. I have constituents who are unemployed.

There's so much that we must do as a Legislature to help not just my constituents but constituents right across this province, and yet we're presented with a bill that does little or nothing. The bills of these governments remind me of my big disappointment at Easter time, when I got a big chocolate egg, and when I put my finger in it, it was empty. That is more and more the kind of bill that we're wasting our time on in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I thought about reading notes, but I'm not going to; I'm just going to go off the top of my head here.

I'll tell you, I remember buying tickets when I used to go watch a Leafs game or a Tiger-Cats game or a Blue Jays game; it was within my budget. These prices have gone off the map. These athletes are making just unbelievable wages.

I remember the big story when Bobby Hull signed with the Winnipeg Jets; it was for \$1 million. Everybody fell out of their seats.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The million-dollar man.

Mr. Paul Miller: The million-dollar man.

The guy in New Jersey—I could be wrong; correct me—I think it was \$14 million he just signed for in New Jersey, for three years. Listen, in our era, a million dollars? Unheard of; \$100,000 was a lot of money.

I remember guys like Bernie Faloney and guys like that, top Hamiltonians who were top athletes, and they didn't make anywhere near this. It's unbelievable. So where does it all stem from? It stems from the outrageous prices and the outrageous salaries that athletes make. Ticket sale prices have gone up 61% in five years in the States—61%. So maybe instead of dealing with this type of bill—consumer protection? There's no consumer protection out there. Honestly, when they charge these kinds of prices—\$500 to go and watch the Leafs? Cripes, I'd rather step on the ice myself than watch those guys

for \$500. They're unbelievable. And I'd work for 50 times less than they do. It's unbelievable.

All I can say is, it's a rip-off from day one, and it continues. These prices and salaries are out of whack, and until we get a handle on that—consumer protection? Nobody can afford to go to the game.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That was a little off topic, but we'll give you two minutes to respond, the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Hamilton East, I guess it is—I should get that right—Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. I know he's a reasonably decent hockey player—I've played with him—but I don't think the topic is just about hockey. Hockey is a great sport; it's priceless, you could say. I can't afford it. But the point is that this bill will do nothing to solve the problem.

The Competition Bureau of Canada has looked at it, and the argument he was making that it's the players' union that has made—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: So he's talking against the union.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're overpaid.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want that recorded, Mr. Speaker. He's saying that they're overpaid. They have a players' union that went on strike a year or two ago, and nobody had hockey. It almost killed Canadians; Canadians were in tears.

The point is, I would say that in all professional sport it is becoming prohibitively expensive, and so are the tickets. It's an elite thing just to go to a Leafs game just to cry. Why else would you go? Last night is a good example. They lost it in the last minute of play.

1700

But Bill 172 simply doesn't protect consumers. As the member from Willowdale said—it's another example of the Liberals sort of misguiding the viewer and the consumer today. It's like the smart meters. They're not smart meters; they're cash machines to get more money in Dalton's pocket—or Premier McGuinty, rather. I think this bill would be right if there was something in it that was going to correct a situation that they believe to be wrong. But what it does—there was an outrage about some concert, and people felt there were scalpers reselling tickets. It doesn't fix that problem. You should enforce the scalping legislation that exists today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm counting on further debate being on topic, and I know it will be. The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Qui? Moi, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No, it's just that we have strayed a little bit in the last minute or two.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I understand, and the Speaker quite properly points out that that may have caused me to focus my attention somewhere to the left or higher or lower—rarely to the right. I appreciate that guidance, and I condemn those who would lead me astray. We surely don't want that to happen.

I want to mention once again that the parliamentary assistant for the Attorney General is here during the course of this debate. It's an honourable tradition in this chamber, as it is in other similar chambers, that either the minister or the parliamentary assistant participate, if only by their presence, and monitor the debate, just as they do during committee. I commend the parliamentary assistant in that regard, and wish that all his colleagues had the same standards.

I mention too that I very much want to speak to Bill 172 and, as I say, to the Ticket Speculation Act. I want to make comments about the statement made by the minister when he introduced the bill. I want to make reference to some of the commentary that has been made in the media—in the press.

First of all, look, this bill has nothing to do with consumer protection—please. I note that the Attorney General, when he introduced the bill in the House, in his ministerial comments, thanked Minister Takhar, Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services, for his close co-operation and support. I don't, for the life of me, understand what the minister contributed to this bill. I know that had his successor, now the Minister of Revenue, been Minister of Consumer Services at the time, she would have been much more forceful about in fact making this bill about consumer protection. But she, of course, had not yet ascended to that role, and the Ministry of the Attorney General was denied her guidance and counsel. I'm afraid that the Attorney General has nothing to thank Minister Takhar about. Minister Takhar would have been bested by his successor had she been in that role at the time this bill was being drafted.

It very much seems to be, and I suppose this will make—I believe there are lobbyists working on this bill. I don't know who they're lobbying for, because I haven't met with them. I don't know whether they are lobbyists for Ticketmaster or for the ticket resale industry in general. But to be very, very fair and accurate, the bill does seem very much to be targeting Ticketmaster and the secondary seller that it owns, called TicketsNow, because they, as I understand at this point—and folks, correct me if I'm wrong; I know you will and I know you'll jump at the opportunity—are reported as being the only primary and secondary sellers that have any relationship. We're told there is a whole pile of secondary sellers—a huge number—but none of them have the relationship discussed in the bill to any primary seller.

Let's understand exactly what the bill does. The bill does not prohibit even a related reseller from selling tickets at an inflated price. Do you understand that? The bill does not prohibit a related reseller from selling a ticket at an inflated price. The bill is very, very clear in that regard. The bill very specifically says that only one or the other shall sell tickets. So assuming that TicketsNow wants to sell tickets at an inflated price, it could, lawfully, even with this amendment having been passed, as long as Ticketmaster wasn't selling tickets at the face value plus commission.

Nobody has addressed the idea of commission, because it seems to have been adopted—and I'll go back to the original Ticket Speculation Act and suggest how I believe that it's not necessary to discuss commissions when you're talking about an agent.

As I understand the business, the promoter of an event, whether it's the Toronto Maple Leafs, whether it's a promoter of rock events at the Air Canada Centre or wherever, whether it's the promoter of a live theatre production or the opera centre down the road here, engages in a relationship with Ticketmaster or a similar agency—Ticketmaster becomes their agent—and it's Ticketmaster or a similar type of agency that sells tickets on behalf of the Canadian Opera Company or the Toronto Blue Jays, amongst others. The Toronto Blue Jays may not use Ticketmaster; I, quite frankly, don't know.

Effectively, what a reseller does, even in the sense of TicketsNow, is commit to purchasing a block of tickets. Any promoter is eager to have his or her event sold out and may well have a bottom line at which point they're still doing fine, and I don't know what that number happens to be for sporting events, as compared to theatrical performances, as compared to rock and roll stadium concert things. It could be 80%. In other words, 80% could pay everybody, including the promoter, and anything beyond 80% could be the gravy on the turkey; it could be the peanut butter on the toast.

The promoter's primary interest is being assured of tickets being sold. A ticket agent can't assure him or her of that, because the ticket agency says, "Well, we're only a ticket agent."

Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me that it's in the interests of everybody that there be a reseller who commits to buying the tickets in the first instance. In other words, if you're promoting an appearance by Leonard Cohen, whose name came up in the course of discussion of resellers in the various news items, and you need minimum 80% coverage for everybody to make money, and anything beyond 80% is gravy, you'd be more than pleased to have your ticket agent in a relationship with a reseller who would buy 80% of the tickets.

Hotels, as I understand it, use this procedure. You get all sorts of travel agents that are resellers, the package promoters. That's why you can go to these websites and get hotel rooms at X% off or Y% off or Z% off.

Airlines do it. They sell blocks of seats. They could care less what they're sold for in the resale market, as long as they've got them sold, booked and paid for—cash in advance, almost inevitably.

It seems to me that the concert industry—we shouldn't restrict it to concerts, because it's sports events and any other type of event—is in a very similar position.

I ask people to take a look at, specifically, section 2 of Bill 172. This is the offence; this is the prohibition:

"No primary seller"—we'll use the word "Ticketmaster," the agent of a promoter—"shall make a ticket available for sale for admission to an event in Ontario if a ticket for admission to the same event is or has been

made available for sale by a secondary seller who is related to the primary seller."

So there's a secondary seller who's got to be related. If a secondary seller, who has got to be related, is selling tickets to an event, the primary seller can't sell tickets. That doesn't prohibit tickets from being peddled at twice, three times, four times, five times their face value.

And then, the corollary of that is subsection (2): "No secondary seller shall make a ticket available"—for the purpose of illustrating, that's TicketsNow—"if a ticket for admission to the same event is or has been made available for sale by a primary seller who is related to the secondary seller." In other words, high-end scalping flourishes and the resale industry thrives, and it appears that the target has been Ticketmaster and TicketsNow. I find this a very peculiar scenario.

1710

Now, I very much want this bill to go to committee. I want it to go to committee because I suspect there are some folks out there who have things to say about it, especially people who learn, as I hope they will during the course of this debate at second reading, that the bill will not protect consumers. There's no consumer protection. It will not protect consumers from outrageous amplification—doubling, tripling, quadrupling—of the face value of tickets.

Let's talk about consumer protection, for Pete's sake. The minister, of course, in his introduction, threw in the whole kitchen sink there. He acknowledged that Ontarians work hard. I wish they would acknowledge that Ontarians work hard to pay the HST on all of these new items and services that are now taxed that were never taxed before. Ontarians work hard, he says. I wish the Attorney General would acknowledge that Ontarians work hard to pay the escalating, the skyrocketing electricity prices, plus the HST on those electricity prices.

Then the Attorney General, in his ministerial comments on the introduction of this bill, said, "They work to support their families and support our economy." Lord knows, this government hasn't been supporting them, so I suppose it's easy for the Attorney General to say that hard-working Ontarians support the economy. They are the economy, or they're victims of the economy, more appropriately.

Then he talks about principles—and I'm reading from the Hansard of the Attorney General's comments when the bill was introduced at first reading. The Attorney General talks about principles. He talks about Ontario consumers "expressing concern ... over unfair ticket resale practices in Ontario."

Now, I understand this to be the frustration and disappointment, because I remember a day when, as does the parliamentary assistant because he's my age—he's either my age or he's younger or he's older, one of the three. We're from pretty much the same era. I remember when kids would line up outside the ticket sales booth overnight waiting to buy tickets to a particularly popular performer, whether it was the Rolling Stones, the Beatles or what have you. So they'd sleep out overnight. They'd

have their sleeping bags, their little cots and lawn chairs, and it would be a news event in itself. It would help promote the event. Even then, there appeared to have been more than a few tickets that ended up in the hands of people who weren't lining up to buy tickets. There would be street-type scalpers. It was scalping. Scalping is an interesting concept too. Of course, here we're talking ticket speculation, but the word that's used colloquially, and quite properly, is "scalping."

I remember Maple Leaf Gardens in its heyday and the drama and colour that touts scalping Leafs tickets would add to a Maple Leafs game. It was always very furtive. It was like buying and owning an Irish Sweepstakes ticket, because you went off in a little corner, and here's a guy in a cap and he shows you this and this and this. In those days, I never bought them, but I have enjoyed scalpers outside of SkyDome, which they now call Rogers stadium. Rogers: It almost gets me off track because I had to deal with them just at noontime today returning a cable box. Honest, Speaker, dealing with Rogers is the most painful, excruciating—you can waterboard me for days at a time before you make me deal with Rogers. But in any event, Rogers stadium—see how that happened? Tickets, ticket speculation, scalpers, SkyDome. I didn't change the name to Rogers stadium. They did, and that got me off into damning Rogers for having the worst customer relations in the world.

But going to Rogers stadium—it may be once a year, and occasionally I'm the object of generosity and sympathy by people who have an abundance of tickets to baseball games. There are those people. So I get gifted a couple of tickets. No lobbyists, no—as often as not, they tend to be members of this chamber. From time to time, I'm the recipient of the generosity of that sort.

From time to time, I can't be so selective about when I go to see a game because I've got either friends visiting the city or relatives visiting, and I want them to see a baseball game. And I enjoy the SkyDome. Baseball is probably the—football games don't interest me. Hockey in the arena—again, down where I live, I more often went to Buffalo games because we were just 20 or 25 minutes across the way from Welland to Buffalo.

I always took delight in waiting until the game started and then buying a ticket from a scalper at a reduced price, not at an exaggerated price. I saw that as one of the great benefits of scalpers.

As a matter of fact, it's interesting, because I was taking a look at the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, an older edition of it, the one that's in the bookcase behind the Speaker's chair. This is the third edition. Its publication date is 1944. Although it has been reset for 1977, it doesn't appear to have been revised. When you look up "scalping," as in tickets or the stock exchange, it is always identified as an Americanism, US slang, and "scalp" as verb in the context of stock exchange: "To buy at very low rates so as to be able to sell at less than official rates." That's what scalpers are doing when you get them after the game has started: You're buying a ticket at less than the face value. Then, of course,

"scalping," US slang: "One who buys and sells at a profit but at a price lower than the official one (esp. unused portions of long-distance railway tickets.)" That's an interesting scenario, because that's obviously not the stuff that's causing people to express concern about scalpers.

You move from there to, I believe, the second edition of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary. There, scalping is "reselling (esp. tickets) at inflated prices." So here we are. The contemporary language of scalping applies most specifically to the complaint that's being expressed here.

The Attorney General said that Ontarians have frustration: "Their frustration stems from the concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to popular Ontario events on the primary market, and then, on the secondary market at much higher prices."

He's being very careful of his language there, because he wasn't spilling the beans; he wasn't telling it all. He was being coy; he was being cute, because he clearly left the impression that you're talking about primary- and secondary-market sellers and resellers regardless of whether they're related or not.

Then he goes on to say, "The McGuinty government wants to do something about this"—the McGuinty government, which has 76% of Ontarians wanting a new government, another party in power. There's Gordon Campbell going on right here in the province of Ontario.

"Gordon Campbell" is going to become a verb, a noun, an adjective. A Premier has been Gordon Campbellled. A government has been Gordon Campbellled. "To Gordon Campbell" as a verb is to throw the towel in when you hit the lows in the polls.

The minister goes to say, "Today"—and that was a year and a half ago; a year and a half, my goodness—"we're moving forward on our commitment to protect Ontario consumers." Protect consumers? How? I'm so eager.

I suspect the parliamentary assistant is going to speak to this, because he's wont to. He's not loath to rise to his feet—or on his feet. You don't rise to your feet; you rise on your feet. He's not loath to rise on his feet and make comments about bills, especially the bills that he has had thrust upon him, imposed upon him, because, again, the Attorney General, who has leadership ambitions, doesn't want to be stuck with laws that end up being real clunkers, sinkers, if you will. Because this bill is a sinker; this bill is a clunker.

1720

The government is saying it's going to address a particular issue out there—a particular issue—when it's going to do nothing of the sort. It will provide no more access to tickets at face value than does the status quo. It will provide not one inch, not one millimetre of access to tickets at face value. I, for one, think that most people are quite prepared to avoid the—well, you don't line up anymore. It's all about computers. When I was talking about lining up for tickets, that was before anybody even thought a computer existed.

That's not true. I remember reading Life Magazine back in the 1950s, and they had this big post-war computer that filled a whole room, a whole floor, of a university. Its capacity was probably less than—let's see; who's playing with their BlackBerry here?—less than that member's BlackBerry in terms of gigabyte capacity, memory. Yes, this member right here with the BlackBerry.

Computers put people, I presume—I haven't got the slightest idea how to buy a ticket for a concert. I have no idea. I, for one, from time to time, have been up to Hugh's Room on Dundas—a great club; a small club. The last person I saw there was Odetta shortly before she died, a great folk singer from New York city and mentor to all the folkies of the 1960s. Pete Seeger actually performed there a few months ago. It was a rare occasion. I know that Ian Tyson has shown up there.

You go to Hugh's Room. You phone them, because they send you an email about who's appearing when. You phone them, and you—again, I think Tyson was selling for 40 bucks, but it's a very, very small room. You phone them up and you say, "Have you got tickets?" And they say yes, or they say no, that you should have called sooner. If they say yes, you get out your credit card and you pay for them, and they're waiting for you at the door.

As I say, I have no idea. I presume it's on the computer that you access an agent like Ticketmaster and you identify where you want to sit, which is interesting, too, because the Attorney General said that this legislation—he was referring to Bill 172—"would, if passed, help to"—this is the qualifying word; this is the very clever language that skilful script writers use—"ensure fair access to entertainment tickets." "Help." I'm not even sure it's going to help. Notice that he didn't say "prohibit"; he didn't say "end"; he didn't say "guarantee fair access."

Consumer protection: Let's look at some of the consumers we're protecting here. I went to Ticketmaster's website this afternoon before we came into the chamber, and I looked up the Toronto Raptors versus the Golden State Warriors. I have no idea who the Golden State Warriors are. There was another entry where they were playing the Boston Celtics. That probably would have been a much more expensive ticket. But courtside row A—this is not from a reseller; this is apparently the face value plus the modest commission—is \$1,120; courtside row B, \$585; side prime, \$240. I had no idea people were paying this kind of money to go to basketball games, and that's not buying from a reseller. Wow. I suppose that the guy or gal who could afford to pay \$1,120 to go to a basketball game at the Air Canada Centre needs protection too. To be fair, there's what is called gondola seating for \$38. "Gondola" gave me the impression that you're probably sitting up there in a basket, swinging from some cable in the ceiling, which is why they call it gondola seating—you're so far removed.

I went on. I thought, "There's a sporting event." I went to U2. That's Bono, yes; not Sonny Bono, but just Bono. Level 200 tickets, up to \$265; level 100 tickets, up

to \$265. Level 500—I can't imagine where that is—tickets at \$110. Then I went to Lady Gaga—you're familiar with her. I'm sure you have her discs all over your car. Lady Gaga, who I don't know a whole lot about—I'm sure pages know more about her than I do. Lady Gaga is a phenomenon, though. The Minister of Revenue is applauding. The Minister of Revenue is a Lady Gaga fan. She's gaga over Gaga, I suppose. I do know that Yoko Ono appeared performed with her recently. But Lady Gaga gets 191 bucks, and that's not scalped prices—191 bucks. Mind you, you can get general admission floor—I can just imagine what that's like; general admission, where you don't have a reserved seat—for \$101. I suppose it's whatever your cup of tea is.

Then—here we go, pages, Justin Bieber. Have I hit some generationally relevant performance here? No, somebody's wincing. Justin Bieber's a Canadian, right? He grew up in—somewhere in Ontario. Where did he grow up? Who knows where Justin Bieber grew up?

Hon. John Wilkinson: In Stratford.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Stratford. Somebody did know here. Yeah, Stratford. Did he grow up in Stratford?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Okay. He grew up somewhere in southern Ontario here. Poor Justin Bieber is \$61 to \$71.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Where did he grow up? Stratford. Okay, well good for him. He's a young phenomenon, a young rock-and-roller. I'm not sure he's rock and roll. I don't know what kind of music that is, but he's a phenomenon.

So this is really out of my league, and I don't know how to buy—again, as I say, Hugh's Room once in a while. The Top O' the Senator used to be a great place, because there you'd pay a—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Have you got a point of order? No, you're not even in your seat.

Anyway, Top O' the Senator. You went there and paid a cover charge of 15 or 20 bucks, you sat down, bought a bottle of wine, and you'd sit and listen to very good jazz performers and some blues performers.

I remember in old days the Riverboat. Do you remember the Riverboat on Yorkville Avenue? As a kid, I used to go there—a great, great venue. There were guys like Phil Ochs and Ramblin' Jack Elliott. That's where you went and you paid a \$5 cover.

It appears that this is all about what the market will bear. Now, I've read about Bruce Springsteen, the rock-and-roller from New Jersey. I do like Bruce Springsteen because he paid homage to—he's sort of Guthrie-esque and Seeger-esque from time to time in terms of his lyrics, writing and singing about working people and working America—or not-working America. This, apparently, is what gave rise to this whole—this is the Y2K of this decade. Because apparently, Bruce Springsteen in New Jersey—and this is from the Corcoran column in the National Post that's been referred to already:

"The most famous example of alleged ticket manipulation is a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey"—I'm quoting now from the column—"where TicketsNow appeared to have tickets even before they were available at Ticketmaster." Oops. "Not only is it the most famous example, it is the only example, and one which Ticketmaster says was due to a local computer malfunction. If Ticketmaster had prematurely sold Springsteen tickets via TicketsNow, it would have been in breach of its contract with the Springsteen promoters."

But if this is the same Springsteen incident that Rob Ferguson is talking about in the *Toronto Star*, where the *National Post* says that it was a mere accident—I don't know what kind of accident that is where the computer glitch has tickets for sale from TicketsNow before they are for sale from Ticketmaster and how that's a computer malfunction. Interesting. But the *Toronto Star* article by Ferguson from April 30, 2009—and I know that's old, but so is this bill—points out that Springsteen complained "to his home state of New Jersey about TicketsNow, prompting the firm to settle the complaint for \$350,000...." That's what isn't mentioned in the *National Post* column, if indeed that's the same incident.

I've got a feeling here that while the PR people for Mr. Springsteen would like to portray him as somebody who's railing against capitalist exploitation of consumers, the real anger here was the fact that somebody was making \$350,000 or more on his concert that his promoters weren't making, because clearly these performers sell tickets for whatever the market will bear, and in fact it's the resellers who are indicating what the market will bear.

1730

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Didn't Howard Moscoe's brother act as a scalper—

Mr. Peter Kormos: As I already told the Minister of Transportation—sorry; yes. The Solicitor General knows that I have already expressed admiration for the scalpers who will sell a ticket under price, as I've expressed admiration for kind, generous people here in the chamber who from time to time have gifted me a ticket, and I've got to tell you that when I was gifted, I looked at the face value. I thought, my God, this ticket is worth that much?

And the public—I was listening to a colleague talk about her uncle in Ottawa who was a hockey fanatic. He would drive to the Forum in Montreal. The new Forum is nowhere near as interesting as the old Forum. But I say that about Maple Leaf Gardens too.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're right.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister notes.

He would drive to Montreal or he would drive to Ottawa, and I suppose he was very much like me. Down in Niagara, before I got elected and before Niagara-on-the-Lake grew very, very big and turned very red flocked velvet wallpaperish—the member from St. Catharines knows exactly what I mean—we would drive up there on a Sunday afternoon and stop in at the Prince of Wales, which was not a particularly busy place. Yes, we had a drink, but then we walked a block down the road to see

what was on at the theatre. We didn't know in advance. There were the two theatres there, and if there was something we wanted to see, as often as not we got good seats, because people who owned the season seats would call and say they were not showing up, and so latecomers would get good seats for a fraction of the price.

Apparently, this gentleman had much the same style. He, at the last minute—maybe it was because of his work schedule—would decide he had to get to the game, but he always bought from scalpers. That's back when the Montreal Forum and Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto were probably far more heavily attended than they are now.

I'm convinced, and I said this at the outset—I'm quoted in some of the press items—that the public would welcome the service of somebody buying a ticket for them. The problem is, this bill doesn't facilitate that in a regulated or controlled way either.

I wanted to get to Justice Haines's ruling from the Ontario High Court of Justice from 1967—Edson Haines, as I said. He was a personal injury lawyer and was the founder of one of the large personal injury law firms here in Toronto. I never appeared in front of him. He was before my time, but he was that old school of judges, rather stern. I'm sure in his private life he was like that old school of judges who were rather gregarious and easygoing and who did things to excesses, though we'll not go any further. But what he had was an interesting appeal by stated case, which is a novel appeal from summary conviction offences. It's still available. What happens is that it's an appeal on the basis of law only. I am familiar; I've done some of those in my former life.

A fellow got convicted of scalping, and not the old-fashioned scalping where you sell a ticket—the minister might know that I was explaining how back in the 1800s in America, scalping consisted of buying stock at a low price so you could still sell it below face value and make a profit; hence "scalping," literally, right? Shaving off the top. Then it was applied to railway tickets, where you would buy from a consumer who had no use for his return ticket; you would buy the railway ticket for less than face value, the half of it, but then resell it for still less than face value but enough to make a profit—scalping. Obviously, as I say, in contemporary usage, in the second edition of the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, scalping is specifically selling tickets at inflated prices.

So here's a scenario, as I say, that was most—especially as a student here in Toronto, down by Maple Leaf Gardens and down along Dundas Street, I've got to tell you, places like Norm's Open Kitchen and the Warwick Hotel were fascinating venues for a young law student, who's interested only in the legal aspect of these things, and perhaps with a bit of an interest in sociology.

Here are the findings of fact. Look at this picture. I remember this picture very well, and I suspect at least a few other members of this chamber do. This is the judge magistrate saying—a deputy magistrate for the county of York. He found as a fact that "on January 22, 1966 at approximately 7:35 p.m., the accused, Allen David Fink,

was in front of the premises known as Maple Leaf Gardens, in the city of Toronto, and that he, at this time, approached several persons and produced something from his pocket and that these persons produced something from their pockets.

"I found further that when a police officer approached the accused and inquired of him if he had any hockey tickets for sale, the accused offered to sell to the said police officer for the sum of \$25 two tickets of admission to the hockey game priced at \$4 each."

Once again—I'm interjecting now for the sake of Hansard—this was at a time when, obviously, the Toronto Maple Leafs had a far bigger audience than they do now. Heck, if a Maple Leafs ticket can cost you \$80 or \$60 for a reasonably good seat, or higher—so this guy is selling \$4 tickets at six times their value. That would be like paying \$600 for a \$100 ticket now.

Here, we're going back to the deputy magistrate, P.J. Wilch. Why is it that only 40 years ago people's names were so much more interesting than they are now? Allen David Fink, being prosecuted for scalping, and being tried by P.J. Wilch.

But the judge further finds, "I found further that each of the said tickets entitled the bearer to admission to a hockey game at the said Maple Leaf Gardens on January 22, 1966.

"I found further that the price of \$4 printed on the said tickets was the price at which the tickets were first issued.

"Accordingly, applying the provisions of the Ticket Speculation Act, I convicted the accused."

A deputy magistrate like P.J. Wilch was the kind of guy that, if he could, would probably give you 30 days in the Don just to make sure you never did it again. When I was a very young lawyer in Niagara, we had some judges down there who seemed incapable of uttering the words "not guilty." I remember one judge—and I successfully appealed his decision—when I was a very young lawyer, told my client, "I'm finding you guilty, and if I didn't have a reasonable doubt, I'd send you to jail." That's a true story; there's a transcript of that. Of course, the county court judge who heard the appeal took note of that. But the interesting thing about the case, and I ask the parliamentary assistant to turn to page 136 of the reported decision—that's in the Ontario Reports.

Oh, heck. Let's do this properly. It's in the Ontario Reports, second, 1967, page 132. The issue in this case was the constitutionality; whether this was criminal law. Maybe the province had no jurisdiction. Because the Ticket Speculation Act—it doesn't go back to the early 1900s, at least not in that name, because I did some searching in the library. I doubt if in the early 1900s, it would have been of much concern, because working-class people went to movie theatres; they tended not to go to the theatre or opera or even—the world is different now. The price of tickets was far different.

This is interesting, on page 136; I think it's relevant. I'm wondering where the government was at in developing Bill 172. "To be of value, any attempt by the

province to regulate the sale of tickets to places of entertainment and amusement in Ontario must be directed to provide for the admission to all public performances of as many persons as possible at prices which are reasonable." That's an interesting ruling. He says that for the province to have jurisdiction to regulate the sale of tickets, the goal has to be, one, "to provide for the admission to all public performances of as many persons as possible at prices which are reasonable."

1740

So help me, Speaker. If that's valid law, and I could find nothing that refuted it, how does this bill provide for the admission to all public performances of as many persons as possible at prices which are reasonable, when I've already pointed out to you what the prices are? Lady Gaga, 191 bucks; U2, \$262. And that's not a scalped price; that's the face price. Again, the Toronto Raptors, courtside, A, B or C: \$1,120. That's not for your family; that's not for your wife or your mistress or your lover or your concubine; it's just for you: 1,120 bucks. Courtside B: \$585. This is the face value of these tickets.

Again, and I don't want to leave him out: Justin Bieber of Stratford is trailing the pack at a mere \$71. There's going to be a whole lot of folks at—I don't know where this is—the Air Canada Centre on Tuesday, November 23, at 7 p.m. There's going to be a whole lot of folks not only driving their kids to the Air Canada Centre that night but also getting out their credit card big time.

This is what Judge Haines says, and he goes on further: "The existence of large audiences of regular attendees is essential to all branches of these industries for their continued growth and development." So he's pointing out—and there is some interesting effort to point out that this bill is essential for the welfare of the industry, that is to say the entertainment industry or the sports industry, whereas the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has already expressed interest and concern. And don't think he's the only one. He could have gone into the movie world. Mind you, it's sad that all this is going on when in the cultural industry, writers, poets, playwrights earn a pittance, by and large. Novelists, people who seek to be published, actors and actresses earn a pittance. You're only talking about the very top of the triangle when you're talking about the multi-billion-dollar sports players or actors or musical performers.

Why I'm reading this is because he's defining what this bill has to be and what this bill has to enhance if it's going to have any validity. He goes on to say, "Nothing I believe is as likely to instill as much chaos and disorder to the entertainment industries as the unchecked activity of ticket speculators." Chaos and disorder? "These speculators, or 'scalpers' as they are often called, operate to buy up varying quantities of tickets to various types of performances in order to place themselves in the positions of monopolists with respect to the resale of the tickets."

Monopoly: Judge Haines appears to be condemning the monopoly. But this bill will create monopolies, because the bill says that the reseller can resell tickets even

if it is not at arm's length, even if it's in a pillow-talk relationship with the primary seller, as long as the primary seller still doesn't sell tickets.

Remember what I said earlier: Concert promoters, like rock concerts—their primary interest is in hitting their bottom line, like 80% occupancy, 80% of the house. If they can get Ticketmaster to arrange for a reseller to pay for those tickets up front, you finance the production. Do you understand what I'm saying? The promoter doesn't have to advertise, doesn't have to do any work.

It seems that most of these things—my gosh—happen so quickly that there isn't big advertising. You don't see big posters around town encouraging people to go and see Bono and U2. People who are fans of Bono and U2 or Lady Gaga or Justin Bieber seem to know what's going on. I've never seen a big billboard saying, "Lady Gaga coming here. Start saving for your tickets now."

You see, the promoters could care less whether the reseller is directly related to the agent. All this bill does is prevent the agent, the primary seller, from selling if, in fact, the reseller is related and is selling tickets. But it doesn't prevent any other reseller who isn't related from selling tickets at any price. That's what I'm saying.

Now, back to poor Mr. Fink—he was a street-level scalper. Again, he didn't know what a computer was. I don't know if he's alive or not; that was 1966, 1967—43 years ago. He still could be; he could be watching. Poor Mr. Fink never dreamed of computerized ticket-selling.

Furthermore—and please, to you, Speaker, and I wish the parliamentary assistant would listen specifically; I talk about chaos and disorder, monopolists. "By then reselling these tickets at highly inflated prices, they deprive many persons of modest means of attending certain performances and they also cause great resentment in many of those to whom they do, in fact, sell."

The victims—who does Judge Haines say are the victims? "The victims of these practices, if they were allowed, would be both those persons whose lives are associated with the entertainment and amusement industries—for the life of me, I don't know how. Again, the performer wants to be paid. As I told you, it could be the Springsteen phenomenon, because I'm not entirely convinced that Mr. Springsteen wanted to rail against the capitalist exploitation of concert-goers when he condemned the resellers; he wanted his piece of the action, and he got it: \$350,000 from Ticketmaster down in New Jersey.

"The victims ... would be those persons whose lives are associated with the entertainment and amusement industries as well as the entire public." This is a beautiful line: "In Ontario, we owe much of our cultural heritage to the performing arts and to the various spectator sports which provide enjoyment and pleasure to all of us and it would seem appropriate to me for the Legislature to take whatever reasonable steps are necessary to protect these aspects of our lives from the dangers of unchecked ticket speculation." I agree with Judge Haines in that regard. My colleague the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek agrees. If only this government would do it.

Take a look at the Ticket Speculation Act—the one that's being amended, not Bill 172, which is doing the amending—and you find an act that's almost as quaint in its language as Judge Haines was in his or, more importantly, Deputy Magistrate P.J. Wilch, the deputy magistrate for the county of York in the province of Ontario. So here we've got the Ticket Speculation Act, which goes back many decades—not to the early 1900s, at least not under that name. Oh, and by the way, I could only find one reported case that dealt with the Ticket Speculation Act, using all of the usual search tools.

What's the law as it stands now? Because that's an interesting point that was made by the Conservative critic on this issue. The law is pretty clear, methinks. This act was last amended in 1989, when they changed the fine from \$50 to \$5,000.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In 1989—you were a member by then.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was a member.

In fact, I suspect that was hidden in an omnibus bill, and I probably couldn't agree with other parts of the omnibus bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Liberals were in government then; they did a lot of omnibus bills.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, they did. That was Liberal Premier Peterson, and then there was Liberal Premier Rae, and now we've got Liberal Premier McGuinty.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think McGuinty is having a chat with Gordon Campbell today.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They could. I think Gordon Campbell is going to be on a lot of Liberals' minds tonight.

In the Ticket Speculation Act, they built—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Please, people; please.

The Ticket Speculation Act, the law that's being amended, defines "ticket" in the usual way. Then they talk about,

"Every person who,

"(a) being the holder of a ticket"—I presume by "holder" they mean the owner, in possession of it—

Interjection: He's not charging for it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No; as a matter of fact, being the holder of a ticket implies that this is pre-computer days, because you can own a ticket now without actually holding it. You buy all sorts of stuff; you buy those Canadian Cancer Society-Princess Margaret lottery tickets for 100 bucks and they give you the confirmation number. If you've got the confirmation number—again, this law was written pre-computer:

"Every person who,

"(a) being the holder of a ticket, sells or disposes of the ticket at a higher price than that at which it was first issued," or who tries—I'm paraphrasing here—to do so, or purchases "with the intention of reselling them at a profit, or purchases or offers to purchase tickets at a higher price than at which they are advertised or announced to be for sale by the owner or proprietor of any place

mentioned"—wow. So the existing law can convict both the purchaser—

Interjection: And the seller.

1750

Mr. Peter Kormos: And the seller. Hmm, I say. Humph, I say again.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How do you write that in Hansard?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Hansard's got that down pat by now.

The existing law in the province of Ontario would permit the prosecution—wait a minute. Let's make sure we get this right. Again, I ask the parliamentary assistant, who is very skilled and learned in the law, to help me with this. Every person who "purchases or attempts to purchase tickets with the intention of reselling them at a profit, or purchases or offers to purchase tickets at a higher price than that at which they are advertised or announced to be for sale by the owner or proprietor of any place mentioned in section 1"—wait a minute. So that means that the guy who buys a scalped ticket—I'm fine. I haven't broken any laws because the only scalped tickets I've bought are the ones that were scalped in the 1880s sense. The guy outside the SkyDome—Rogers, a horrible company, bad customer service. Rogers Cable are an indecency and an affront to civility. It's Rogers stadium. When I go to Rogers stadium to buy an 1880s-style scalped ticket at less than face value, I'm not committing a crime, nor is the guy or gal selling it to me, but if I go there and buy a ticket above face value, then I am committing a crime as the purchaser, as is the vendor. Aha.

Let's get up to date. Let's get up to 2010; fast forward this little scenario. It's no longer me with a couple of cousins or some friends and I want to take them to a baseball game—it's not only the price of tickets but the price of beer there, and popcorn. Jeez. Deadly. I don't know how Rob Ford could have gotten drunk at a Raptors game. I couldn't afford to. Good God. Think about it: The price of beer at Rogers is \$85 a bottle or something, isn't it? But he was at Air Canada. Maybe it's cheaper at Air Canada.

Mr. Jeff Leal: How much was it?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was \$85 a bottle or something, I remember, or \$120. The beer was just horribly expensive. Last time I was there, I shared it with my two cousins. We sipped out of that little Dixie cup.

Parliamentary assistant, if the existing law can convict not just the person who buys a ticket above face value but the person who attempts to purchase tickets with the intention of reselling them at a profit, why can't it go after these resellers right here and now—and not just TicketsNow, but every single one of them. Why can't it? It doesn't want to, does it? It doesn't want to. Do you understand?

The law as it exists would allow the investigation, prosecution and conviction of a reseller, related or not, who purchases or attempts to purchase tickets with the intent of selling them at a higher than face-value price.

There's a Liberal argument that I'm going to get to in a minute.

What is Bill 172 all about? What's the matter with you guys? What were you thinking? Were you? Were you really intent on addressing the problem? Or is this another feel-good, we-feel-your-pain announcement in the midst of 76% of Ontarians saying that they want to see another party in power?

Let me tell those folks right now who don't like getting dinged by resellers, this bill will not end the resale business. It will add nothing whatsoever to the existing legislation.

There are certain exemptions, exceptions, in section 3 of the existing Ticket Speculation Act, and that is, where a proprietor of a shop or a hotel stand—so if you've got a stand in a hotel, you can resell tickets, if you've got a shop for the purpose of resale. But then they have a maximum commission. You see, what the existing law does is imposes—but this only applies to a very limited number of retailers: a hotel or a shop. But I say that you could expand this to include all resellers. And then the commission: on a ticket of up to \$1.99, it's 25 cents—you can't even get a streetcar ticket or a subway ticket in this town for that, or anywhere else; \$2 to \$2.99, it's 35 cents—you're still in for a streetcar ride; \$3 to \$3.99, 45 cents; \$4 and up, 50 cents. Now, you do the calculation, and that's approximately 12.5%.

So I say to you, Speaker, why are we mucking around with this silly bill, with this bogus bill, when the law is already there, and there in a much fairer way? Because it caps the amount of commission that a person has to pay. As I say, I'm insisting that people who want to go for whatever reason to see Lady Gaga, God bless her, or people who for whatever reason—of course, young people want to go see Justin Bieber. If you want to go to see Justin Bieber, good for you. If you want to go do that, I say go to Hugh's Room down on Dundas Street—a much smaller venue, better show, top-quality artists. But if you're disinclined and you want to go to a big, big concert venue—I used to go to them back in the 1960s, 1970s. I don't remember them very well, for the obvious reasons.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, come on, now. Bob Dylan and the Grateful Dead at Rich Stadium? Please, give me a break. You wouldn't remember that, either, but I know it was fun. Jerry Garcia was something, let me tell you.

So you've already got a system, a structure in place that caps the commission at 12.5% by certain groups of resellers. The problem is that the government has no more intention of expecting the enforcement of the law, as amended, as it does now. Perhaps the parliamentary assistant, if and when he comments on this, and I suspect he will—and I'm eager to hear what he's got to say—could explain why. Because, you see, if something's *prima facie* against the law in the civil courts, you can also get injunctions. In other words—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Listen, please, to the parliamentary assistant, through you, Speaker. This government, this Attorney General, could be getting injunctions against resellers—

Interjection: Why?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Because they're in breach of the statute as it exists. You know darn well they could, Speaker. They haven't done it. They haven't lifted a finger.

Protection of consumers, my foot. Prohibition of scalping, my—I guess I'll stick with feet—my foot. It's just not here. The government can spin this, and I know the parliamentary assistant, who's very skilful in his comments, is going to talk about getting consumer protection and fairness—please. Zip, zero, nada, zilch; it's not here.

It seems to me that updating—and as I told you, in 1989, the fine was increased from \$50 to \$5,000. The government proposes as a corporate fine some—what is it?—\$50,000 in the amendment? It's \$50,000.

Let's address the issue, if the government indeed wants to address it. I'm not convinced they do. At the same time, I understand that there's a combines investigation going on—there was a media report—of the relationship between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow. Let's see what they have to say about that.

That's why I'm eager to see this go to committee. I'd like to see and hear Ticketmaster's version. I'd like to hear what they've got to say. I'd like to see what TicketsNow has to say. I'd like to hear what some of the other resellers have to say. And if Mr. Fink is around, I'd very much like to hear what he's got to say. That's Allen David Fink, who, in 1966, was scalping tickets in front of Maple Leaf Gardens, presumably—obviously—to a Maple Leafs game.

This bill warrants committee. The committee doesn't have to be lengthy. It doesn't have to be weeks. I'm eager to sit on that committee. I know the parliamentary assistant would be handling this bill through committee. He would be in charge of it. He would be whipping the government caucus. I also know he would be fair and reasonable because he would feel much freer in committee to say what he really thinks than he does here in the chamber, because committees are a little bit of a different beast than the chamber.

1800

At this point I'm so excited about this bill going to committee, even though I insist it means zip. In fact, it aggravates the situation and may well be unfair to Ticketmaster because it singles them out. Again, it purports to create an offence that already very much exists in a much broader sense and may not meet the constitutional standard set by Judge Haines back in the Queen and Fink case of 1967, Ontario Reports 2, page 137.

I think there are problems here. We're going to vote for this bill on second reading only on the vaguest, minimal principle just because we're eager to see it get to committee so that the government can be exposed for that

little man behind the curtain that it, in fact, is at this point in its history.

Good for Gordon Campbell.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with a question to the Minister of Labour.

The member for Beaches–East York has up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: On the last occasion, I had an opportunity to ask the Minister of Labour a question on the issue of tip-outs. I asked him about some of his past correspondence that he had written under ministry letterhead to a server who lived in the riding of Scarborough Southwest and who had had an opportunity to deal with the member from Scarborough Southwest as well as the minister.

The reality of the situation for servers is that employers hold all the cards. If a server refuses to share the tips that he or she gets on a given evening or during the course of their job—weeks or months long—then they, in all likelihood, will be terminated; they will lose their job. If they agree to the tip-out, then they will lose somewhere between 30% and 100% of the tips. In reality, that is, many times, between 15% and 75% of their take-home wages.

There is no redress that any server in this province has if monies are withheld by employers who simply take it and don't give it to them at all, by employers who take the Visa receipts, particularly in higher-priced restaurants, and at the end of the month tell the server, "I'm sorry, these times have been tough. I'm not going to remit to you any of your tips at all." There is absolutely no redress from the Ministry of Labour. And there is no redress whatsoever to those poor servers who are charged on their tips—for any breakage that might occur, whether it occurs or not; on the uniforms they are required within some of the restaurants to wear; and on the Visa transactions that people go in and want to pay with. You know, here we've got, really, multi-millionaire guys taking money off people who make \$8.90 an hour.

The ministry responded callously and brutally to the servers when this question was asked last spring: "Tips are not wages. The manner in which tips are split between employees and employers is determined by the two parties."

The Minister of Labour was asked, does he continue now to tell us whether he still supports the rip-off of servers? What we got was a diatribe of nonsense from the

minister. I am not holding my breath that I'm going to get anything but the prepared statement from his parliamentary assistant today, because I'm sure it's all written out, and he will read it carefully as he always does.

But the minister was incredible, and his answer was as incredible as it was ridiculous. He said, "I think I speak for all of us when I say that our waiters and waitresses, our bartenders and hostesses do an amazing job" and then blah, blah, blah about the service they provide. How is that answering the question of the tip-outs? He concluded by saying, "If any restaurant employee, hotel employee, any employee in Ontario feels that they have been mistreated, I do ask that they contact the Ministry of Labour so our officials can investigate."

They have contacted the Ministry of Labour. They have contacted the member from Scarborough Southwest, who is the parliamentary assistant. They have contacted the minister. And all they're told is, "We can't do anything because tips aren't wages."

What we are asking the minister quite simply to do is—is he going to, with the stroke of a pen, change that law? I put in a bill, Bill 114, that all members in this House voted for, and I don't care whether that bill passes or the minister does something equally or under his own name or under the Liberal Party banner. I want the rip-off to end, and I want to know what this minister is going to do. He's known about it for years. I want to know what he's going to do, and not have him tell me that waiters and waitresses do a good job. Of course we know that. Does he support—this is the question and this is the whole thing. Does he continue to support the rip-off of servers, as his earlier correspondence has said, and that he himself will not answer in this House, or is he willing to do something to end the egregious practice, which has been banned in other jurisdictions in this country and in the United States? It's a pretty simple question: What is the minister going to do? And I don't want to hear that waiters and waitresses are good people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough Southwest, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Again, I want to thank the member for engaging in the debate on this issue.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the hard work that our waiters and waitresses do. They're on the front line of a successful hospitality and tourism industry in Ontario, and I know we have all been on the receiving end of the important service that they provide.

As the minister said the other day in response to the member's question, our government takes very seriously the rights of all employees of Ontario. That is why the Ministry of Labour works hard every day to ensure that workers' rights are protected under the Employment Standards Act.

With respect to the issue the member has raised regarding the practice of tipping out, I want to reiterate that the Employment Standards Act ensures that every employee in this province is protected by our Employment Standards Act. There are specific rules for the pay-

ment of employees' wages, and the Ministry of Labour enforces those rules.

Often, tips are a matter that is agreed upon between employees and employers; and we expect that employers treat their employees with respect. Employers understand that their success depends on service staff who are competent, caring and suitably compensated. Good service is good for them and good for the Ontario service sector and tourism industry.

Restaurant workers, including servers, cooks and cleaning staff, are protected by the standards in the Employment Standards Act, such as the hours-of-work limits, daily and weekly rest requirements, vacation, and leave-of-absence entitlements. Any employee who has a question about their rights or entitlements, or who believes they are being mistreated by their employer, should contact the Ministry of Labour's employment standards information centre or visit our website.

All claims that are filed with the employment standards program are investigated. Ministry staff work hard every day to ensure that Ontario workers' rights are protected under the Employment Standards Act.

We have made significant investments in employment standards over the past few years to ensure that this good work continues. This government has done more to enforce the Employment Standards Act than the two previous governments combined. We've adopted a multi-pronged approach that consists of increased outreach, education, enforcement and prosecution, along with more employment standards officers than ever before.

Our government is well aware that we are living in tough economic times. It's not easy for some of our province's lowest-paid workers to make ends meet. That is why we have raised Ontario's minimum wage rates every single year since we took office. Minimum wage in Ontario is now \$10.25. That's the highest minimum wage in Canada. It was the right thing to do, considering that workers went nine long years with no minimum wage increases whatsoever.

We are very proud of our record in raising living standards for Ontario's most vulnerable workers, including restaurant servers. Again, I want to thank the member for initiating this very important discussion, and I look forward to the ongoing debate as this matter moves through the legislative process.

1810

PLANT CLOSURE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk: You have up to five minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yesterday, I felt I received little but misdirection. There were some boasts of government investment when I asked about government inaction on

the closure of the Smucker's cucumber tank farm in Delhi and Bick's processing operation in Dunnville.

The decision by the J.M. Smucker Co. of Orrville, Ohio, to close these operations means an end to hundreds of full-time positions and hundreds more part-time and seasonal employment. In Delhi, we are talking about the possible end of a state-of-the-art, 73-acre tank farm established in 1998 by US-based Robin Hood Multi-foods. It has 600 vats. They can brine 60,000 pounds of cucumbers. It's one of the most modern tank farms in North America. I attended the grand opening not that many years ago with a former ag minister, Noble Villeneuve.

Its value is unquestioned. In fact, when Smucker-Bick's bought the holdings of Robin Hood in 2006, the investment just in Delhi was worth about \$12 million. It meant an awful lot more to the offshore local farm workers, many of them Mexican and German Mennonite. They enjoy steady employment. Thanks to that bridge that cucumbers provide between asparagus and strawberries earlier in the summer, it takes you through to the tobacco and apple season. There's going to be a month-long gap right in the middle of the summer season. The tank farm provided contracts for 200 growers. No more contracts. Presently, it's estimated that they provide farm employment for about 300 seasonal workers.

Meanwhile, over in Haldimand county, where Bick's consolidated its vegetable processing in Dunnville after closing down production in Scarborough—that was in 2001. According to the Dunnville Chronicle, the processing there employs up to 260 full-time and part-time employees, and this does not include numerous farmers who provided product for a facility that's 385,000 square feet. This was the last major industry Dunnville had. It's the largest employer in the county after Imperial Oil, OPG and US Steel. We have concern with respect to US Steel—I'll be talking about that in a few minutes. And we know that this government will be eliminating 600 jobs at Nanticoke OPG.

It seems to be a recurring theme. Smucker's is planning to close down these local facilities and their related jobs, as well as a jam and jelly facility in Ste. Marie, Quebec, while the company—and this is a familiar tune—plans to expand processing in Orrville, Ohio, and in Ripon, Wisconsin. I understand that much of our local agricultural activity will be moving to Wisconsin in the year 2012.

There was a letter to the editor of the Dunnville Chronicle. A fellow named Jon Sims-Davies indicates that pickles from India are being promoted at \$1.49 a jar while domestically produced Bick's sit on the shelf at \$3.49. He talks at length about concerns with respect to hygiene and quality.

J.M. Smucker will be closing down the Dunnville vegetable processing and the Delhi tank farm by the end of next year. We're concerned about the Obama buy-America policy, whether this is somewhat behind this: driving investment and driving jobs south.

My question, as I indicated earlier, is a request for this government to pick up the phone. I made mention of this in the Legislature on September 30 and tried to make it very clear the devastation this will have in the Dunnville and Delhi area. Farmers in Delhi produce not only cucumbers but also, for Smucker's, cauliflower, tomatoes, peppers, beets, onions.

Again, the concern, the question: What progress is being made with respect to this? Where are we on this file? Is anybody trying to pull things together? There's great potential for a new facility—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: five minutes.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I want to thank the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for his question.

As I said yesterday, we certainly understand that any plant closing has a significant impact on employees, families and the community, and we know that our agri-food sector is key to the strength and the vitality of our province.

Just to put it in context, Ontario's food processing sector is about a \$33-billion industry. It directly employs 110,000 Ontarians, and it buys almost three quarters of Ontario's farm production. So it's a significant sector in our Ontario economy.

I want to speak specifically to the investments made by our rural economic development fund, and specifically I want to talk about a grant that was extended to Smucker's. It was a grant for \$2.2 million. And we had been working very hard with Bick's. We were very disappointed to hear that Smucker Foods had made the business decision. They then returned the grant money that we had already sent to them.

So I say to the member from across the way: We have been working very diligently to support, specifically, Smucker's, and we will continue to work very hard, and we have demonstrated that at every step. Two hundred and ninety million dollars: We've seen a rejuvenation within the processing sector. That represents 6,200 jobs. It's significant.

Another opportunity I want to speak to is specifically on that area and how dependent it is upon local product. The member spoke about CanGro. There was an opportunity that arose from CanGro. Specifically, it was Niagara Natural Fruit Snacks. It's a case in point, where one sized down and another saw an opportunity. A new business grew out of that closure, and it was another food processing firm, and we were able to work with them. They received rural economic development funds. What they produce is natural fruit snacks, and they are wonderful. They taste like you have just picked a fruit off the tree and you are eating it in a snack. They have been very successful. I can tell you that the farmers are quite excited about having the ability to have so many of their fruits being processed in this manner. It stores well, and it's selling well. It's a wonderful alternative.

I know that as companies restructure, it causes some—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Anxiety.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: —anxiety within the community. But what I can say to the member across the way is, he mentioned CanGro; we made an investment there. He mentioned Smucker's; we made an investment there. Unfortunately, they actually sent that money back to us. But I think that speaks to the good working relationship that OMAFRA has with our food processing sector. We know how important it is, and we're on the ground working with them. The two examples he gave yesterday are two examples where we made investments.

But we've done even more. When the member talked about buying pickles from India, it speaks to specifically why it's important to "buy Ontario." That's why, as a government, we've invested \$65 million to get people to buy local food. I'm very pleased to say that today it's recognized. It's no longer a trend; it's a shift. That's significant, because that means there is more retail shelf space, and that means there is more Ontario product going forward, and that means there are more jobs.

We recognize that there's much more work to do. Our farmers recognize that the product they sell can compete across the world. That is why we're working with our processing sector, and that is why we have made such significant investments: because we know, being the second-largest sector in the province of Ontario, we can do so much more because of the quality of our food.

People want to buy local food. They want to buy local food because they know it's safe.

So I say to the member, I'm standing in your late show to answer your question again. We're working with both those companies. We've made investments. We're going to continue to support our agriculture, and we're going to continue to support our processors.

1820

LABOUR DISPUTE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Acting Premier. Member for Haldimand–Norfolk, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I really do appreciate and thank the Legislature for this time. I did indicate my dissatisfaction with the answer to my question, first to the Acting Premier and then on to the labour minister.

In fact, neither the Minister of Finance nor the Minister of Labour, in my view, provided anything near an answer to my question of what the government is doing now, today, tonight, to bring resolution to this labour roller-coaster that workers at US Steel, both Hilton and Lake Erie Works, have been forced to endure.

It was earlier this year that I was asking for a late show due to unanswered questions with respect to the steelworkers down at Lake Erie Nanticoke, the US Steel plant down there. As we know, US Steel is the largest steel maker in the United States. They took over Nanticoke's Lake Erie Works, and acquired Stelco Inc. in

2007 for \$1.2 billion. This was Canada's last domestically owned steel mill. Dofasco, Algoma and Stelco have all been purchased by foreign companies. We have a US company purchasing Canadian plants, and those Canadian plants are now vulnerable to foreign competition from the United States. Under President Obama's buy-America regime, we see a trend here: competition from US plants owned by the same company, US Steel. US Steel indicated then they have to wait for the economy to come back and the price of steel to return.

We saw what happened down in my area: Steelworkers with Local 8782 saw 1,100 laid off; 157 were locked out until last spring. They were locked out for a 10-month period altogether. I would visit the plant gates, usually at night, last winter. You would hear coyotes. You would see the odd turkey during the day, occasionally deer. There was just nothing going on down there, and that's the anchor for our regional economy. Thankfully, workers in that area headed back to work. There was an agreement in April.

I do note, however, that the issue of the 47 workers who belong to the same union local as the other workers at US Steel, 8782, legally work for another company, the former Heckett that's now called Harsco Metals—that's unresolved. They've been locked out since March 2009. They've been locked out for 15 months now.

At Hilton Works US Steel, déjà vu all over again: Close to 1,000 workers, again, many from my area, are being threatened. We have a heritage with that company in Hamilton going back to 1910.

We'll talk a bit of money here: Taxpayers doled out \$150 million during Stelco's bankruptcy protection before US Steel received federal government approval for a takeover based on job and steel production commitments, commitments that have yet to be met. I continue to question what input this Ontario government has had with the federal level to ensure protection of Ontario jobs. I've spoken to the federal government. I've been unable to receive any confirmation of anything in this regard.

While the finance minister told me today, "We will continue to work with the federal government," he was negligent on any details whatsoever as to what work that exactly entails. The labour minister did chime in on the supplementary and said that, "If there is any chance or hope of keeping the plant going, of assisting those workers, we will be there for those workers." I would suggest that the government be there now, be there tonight, not sometime in the future.

The current labour contract, as I understand, in Hamilton—that would be Local 1005 and US Steel—expired at the end of July. There has been a provincial conciliator who couldn't bring both sides together and issued a no-board report. I would like to hear some of the details of that this evening, because the clock is ticking. Will a lockout in Hamilton permanently close the blast furnace? It has already been shut down. Media reports indicate that US Steel is bringing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The parliamentary assistant, the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane: You have up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. David Ramsay: First and foremost, I'd like to say to the member that we very much feel for the families and the workers in what has happened in Hamilton, in that ongoing situation with US Steel. No one at present, as the member knows, is being laid off, and all of the 300 workers have been reassigned to other jobs. However, it is still unfortunate that when these types of situations occur, families and workers' lives have been disrupted. The whole community has been impacted.

Job creation and economic growth remain a priority for this government. Our investments are creating a generation of highly skilled, highly trained people who will make Ontario globally competitive through our skills to jobs action plan and Employment Ontario, which includes our rapid re-employment and training services and our Ontario skills development program.

The Ontario government has always had two main objectives in the 2004-06 Stelco restructuring: to ensure the long-term viability of the former Stelco, and to protect the pensions of the retirees and current employees. We have met both of those objectives.

The government is proud to have played a role in Stelco's successful 2006 restructuring. We were active participants in discussions regarding Stelco throughout the entire 26-month process to bring about financial restructuring, and we provided a note, or a loan, if you will, for \$150 million. The funding provided under this note went directly towards reducing the pension deficit and has helped bridge the important gap in coming to a final acceptable restructuring plan. The province will allow

US Steel Canada to eliminate the pension deficit over a 10-year period, and if the pension deficit is fully eliminated within 10 years, the loan will be 75% forgiven; so there's an incentive there. If the company is in good financial shape and able to fully eliminate the deficit within 10 years, warrants received by the province as consideration for our \$150-million note will help to ensure that Ontario taxpayers receive value for their contribution.

I want to commend the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Labour for all the work that they are doing on this situation. We also have one of our highly skilled mediators assisting all the parties at the table.

We'll continue to do everything we can to assist the parties to find an agreement. Our focus is always on working with the parties and helping to bring them together to work towards a final agreement. We believe that agreements reached at the table are the most productive, stable and fair. Our record speaks for itself.

Last year, more than 97% of negotiations in Ontario were successful without a work stoppage. This is in stark contrast to the Conservatives, who turned the labour climate into chaos, and the NDP, who ripped up hundreds of direct collective agreements.

Ontarians don't want to turn the clock back to this. We'll keep working together and moving forward to find labour peace.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn the House to be carried. This House is adjourned till Thursday, November 4, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1829.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
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Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
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Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 4 November 2010

Jeudi 4 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 4 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 4 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Bentley has moved second reading of Bill 110. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be deferred to the conclusion of question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2010, on the motion relating to time allocation on Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / *Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just a few words on this bill just to complete it: We're obviously against the time allocation motion, and we just want to remind people that the bill doesn't do what the public believes it's going to do. Yes, it prohibits the lobbyists from being hired using public dollars, but private dollars, as it relates to the community colleges or universities, can be used to hire lobbyists. The practice will continue.

It's not as if we've ended the practice of lobbyists; it will continue. That loophole remains. God bless the lobbyists. God bless all these people who make good

money trying to talk to the ministers and the politicians. They're not out of business yet. This province is open for business, any time of the day, to any lobbyist named as such or renamed in any other way. They are still open for business.

Peter Kormos should become a lobbyist, for God's sake.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Why? Who would he lobby for?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just make a couple of good bucks and donate all that money to the New Democratic Party; that would be good. It's not about you, Peter. It's about what you can do for the party as a lobbyist.

Mr. Peter Kormos: What about the food banks?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Any leftover money that you earn, we can give to the food banks because God knows there's a big lineup. You know these other lobbyists are not doing the food bank folks any good, because I don't see their money being given to the needy. No, it's all about the pecunia for themselves.

You understand the bill still says that inside lobbyists within the firm are still—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We are very delighted that, finally, someone stands up in the NDP and proclaims their position.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order. The honourable member may continue.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless the member from Davenport.

Mr. Peter Kormos: From Cuba, from Havana. The member from Havana.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We need you. The world needs you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The world has him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The world needs him on a daily basis in this place.

Inside lobbyists can still carry on. The bill doesn't affect them. In fact, it says inside lobbyists can still do the good work they do. You understand, the bill simply allows those good people to continue to be open for business and to do what they've always done; that is, make money for so little, because that is the nature of the job.

How many of the people who used to work for ministers leave this place and become consultants and lobbyists? This happens by the dozens, by the thousands. They have the inside track; they still know staff that remains there. They can call John, Peter and Paul and say, "Hey. How you doing? Let's have coffee." And immediately that is a net benefit of 5,000 or 10,000 bucks, depending on what it is that he's trying to do, because every meeting

you get, every phone call you make that is received by the other side—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Billable hours.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You just bill for them, right? Better than lawyers, because I think they get more money.

God knows, I remember when I was in government, and someone I know wanted access to the Minister of the Environment. I thought, "Okay. What's the idea?" I needed to know that the idea was something that I could support; I needed to know that first. Then I said, "Okay. I'm going to arrange a meeting with the staff," which I did. He tells me later that I saved him loads of money—look how naive I was—because I was doing the work of a consultant for free because I felt it was my job to link people up if they had good ideas and they couldn't get meetings with the minister, right? But he told me that he would pay up to \$20,000 to get a meeting with a minister. God bless. I said, "Holy cow! I could have been rich." Every time I arranged such a meeting, I could have been loaded with money, with the pecunia that so many desperately want and adore.

0910

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Open up a side company, then.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But that's the thing. So many do. How many Conservatives do that on the side? Not to name names, because some of you are—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mike Harris works for a law firm now, and he's not a lawyer.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Look at Mike Harris. I think he's earning \$100,000 a year. Or is that peanuts? I'm sure he's earning more than that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: A mere bagatelle.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That is Mike Harris. I know not everybody can be a Premier and earn the top bucks, but the guy killed our pensions and left with a—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know, Peter Kormos. Thank you.

He leaves with 860,000 bucks and the rest of us are left holding the bag. You fine people and oh so many Tories who got elected in 1995—we're just getting 4,000 bucks in RRSs. Mike left with pecunia. He could barely carry them bags; that's right. He did okay.

Not to mention all the fine Liberals who have left to become consultants, because it's a much more positive term than "lobbyist"—such a loaded, negative word. So consultants are making good money. Liberals are open for business. The bill doesn't eliminate that business. They can still carry on and do their fine work; not to worry.

But the public believes, based on what the Liberals are saying, "We closed that door. It's gone; that's it; we did it," because the Auditor General said, "Do this and the job is done." So the Liberals stood up and said, "We did what he said. The job is done. No more work to be done."

That loophole that the Auditor General identified was closed, but all the other loopholes are still there so that people can carry on and do what they've always done. It's still—

Mr. Dave Levac: Don't be cynical, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you need to say what needs to be said. It is so hurtful to me to know that so many non-profit organizations—4,500—who are strapped for money, and have been strapped for the last 15 years, used some their meagre resources to hire consultants to give them access to this government, hoping that in using some well-connected Liberal consultant they might get a few more dollars. But there's nothing to give. There's a \$20-billion deficit; they should know that. Liberals are not about to give any money to anybody. Consultants and lobbyists should be out of business by now, you would think. With this deficit, no appeal can be made to any minister, because every minister is going to say, "I'd like to help you, but we've got a big debt here, a big deficit. Come back another time. Come back after the next election. I'm sure we can find money then."

In the meantime, poor non-profits, desperate for money, are paying lobbyists to try to get access and to try to get a few dollars. It's sad. In my mind, it is a sad, sad story. When I think about this bill, when I'm trying to think whether there's something positive—you want to try to be positive from time to time, because otherwise people say, "You're always so negative." It is true that the Liberals did listen to the Auditor General; they did. Is that a good thing? Yeah. What else could they do? On a positive note, they said, "We told the Auditor General to go in and investigate." Even better. So I want to thank you for appointing or telling the Auditor General to just go do the job. On the day that he released the report you had a bill ready to go, because you wanted to do something to show goodwill. You had the bill ready to go, the very same day. So you did that. That's good. You got to say that. Otherwise, when the rump is in tears, some of us have to help out, right?

I love to see the rump because often these benches here are empty. You say, "Where are they?" And every now and then, my good friend from Scarborough—Rouge River says, "They're in the front benches, filling in seats." Which was a good observation, because I thought, "Gee, they're not here." But they are here, sitting in the front benches warming up those seats, just getting ready to become ministers of the crown, right? So they are here. Somebody else isn't here. So when they're not praising you, I've got to do the praising.

You've done something good. You could do a little more, but it's not the Liberal way. The Liberal way is only to do what you can get away with. Just do a little bit so that you can say, "It's historic."

Mr. Peter Kormos: And then there's Gordon Campbell.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Gordon Campbell—God bless him. It was honourable.

Mr. Peter Kormos: One down, one to go.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was time to go. And as my good friend from Welland says, when is the next one coming?

But as Jim Coyle of the Toronto Star said, I don't think the Premier is going anywhere, because I think he likes the job. I think he believes he can persuade people that it's a good thing: the GST was good, free trade was

good, the harmonized sales tax is good. We have high unemployment throughout the world, we're losing middle-class jobs and everything is good. Don't worry; the Premier will be able to persuade people that the HST is good.

While the popularity of this government is plummeting by the day, don't worry, fine Liberals, the Premier will save you. Seventy-six percent of respondents say they would like to see another party in power, but not you. Stick around. Be firm. Be strong. It'll be fine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 32. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will defer this vote until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2010, I'm now required to put the question.

On October 25, 2010, Ms. Smith moved second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will also vote on this matter in deferred votes after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): When Bill 172 was last before the House, Mr. Kormos had completed his remarks. It's time for questions and comments on the member for Welland's remarks. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know the member from Welland talked about scalping being illegal, and I was thinking to myself, "If it's illegal, why aren't we enforcing the law?" Why do we have so many police over on Bathurst north of St. Clair every day aiming that gun trying to catch people who are speeding? There are no residents over there, right? Some mornings, there are two policemen; some mornings, three; some mornings, four; and some mornings, one. What the heck are they doing? Maybe they saved them all up for the G20 so they could just bring them all together because they need them there, and really enforce the law during that kind of serious pre-occupation—against threats to the world.

So you say to yourself, "If scalping is against the law, why isn't the Liberal government enforcing it? Why isn't the Liberal government telling and directing police to root out this particular problem?" To me, it's a big wonder. So that's one question I've got.

0920

The other question I have is that, when you think about this issue, the government obviously is saying, "We're going to eliminate the potential collusion there is between Ticketmaster, which sells tickets, and the corresponding related company, because there is money to be made, and it's in the courts to deem whether this is collusion." Of course it's collusion. This arm says to the other, "Yeah, you can buy and resell, and we're going to make some of that money." Naturally there's collusion. But it doesn't solve the problem because brokers are still going to be able to buy and resell. Nobody's controlling those big brokers buying and reselling.

I have a solution, member from Welland. My view is let's boycott these events. Let's boycott sports events and other concert events. That will teach them a lesson. That will bring down prices real quick.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That means you're not going to the Lady Gaga concert?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's right. It's a suggestion of mine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I think we all need to agree that consumers need protection and they need protection for buying tickets for hockey games—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Member for Simcoe, tickets to the Islanders at Little Current and tickets to the Beavers at Blind River are not a huge problem as far as this particular concern, although both have very worthy hockey teams that we should go see.

My folks even in Algoma-Manitoulin attend concerts around the province, they attend sporting events around the province, and they know that they want a fair-priced ticket. They want to know that there is not collusion

amongst—we've heard about Ticketmaster, but others. People are concerned in a number of jurisdictions.

I think this is a key point: What this legislation actually does is harmonize our laws with those of jurisdictions around the country and around the US so that we will be able to enforce our laws so that our consumers will be protected. It is important that people know that they are getting value for money and that they are not having the price of the ticket manipulated by large powerful corporations that have the ability to buy large blocks of tickets etc. I think this is a good step forward.

I remember, and my good friends in the New Democrats can remember, the first time we dealt with this issue in my time, which would be back in about 1988 or 1989. Our good friend Gilles Pouliot came to me, and he said, "You know, I just spent an hour trying to explain free enterprise to the third party." I thought it was entertaining, and Gilles was always on the mark.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Gilles understood free enterprise. I could tell: He was the only member of the NDP I ever knew who had more than one Rolex watch. They know that.

We were talking about the member for Welland's comments, though we got a little carried away from there, and I agree with most of what the member said. This bill will do nothing. It will do nothing to create one more seat at any venue in Ontario. It will do nothing to save one purchaser of those seats one thin dime. This bill, make no mistake, will do nothing.

Where I separate from the member for Welland is on his use of the word "collusion." He assumes that there is collusion. The Competition Bureau of Canada did an exhaustive investigation into the relationship between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow, and they found no sign of collusion. The US competition bureau did an investigation on TicketsNow and Ticketmaster after the New Jersey Bruce Springsteen concert, and they found no example of collusion.

I would suggest to the member from Welland that he uses the word "collusion" in relation to this bill outside this House at his own peril. You are protected in this House; you are not protected outside the House, and I challenge the member to use the word "collusion" in dealing with this when he exits this chamber. We'll see how his commitment to this assertion, whether or not it's—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do you have an interest in Ticketmaster?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Do I have an interest in Ticketmaster? I say, no, I do not. But I do have an interest in legislation that comes before this House that is a complete and total sham. That's what this legislation is: It's a complete and total sham on the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity to hear most of the speech the other day from my colleague from Wel-

land, and he tells it like it is. That's what he does. He stands in this House and he tells it like it is.

For my honourable friend who just spoke, the member from Halton, if the member from Welland uses the word "collusion" in this House, it's because he can. It's because we are protected inside this House from telling it like it is.

What is happening out there on the street when people try to buy tickets is that they're getting ripped off. We all know they're getting ripped off. We know that if you go out and try to buy a ticket for the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey game—given the way that they're playing, I don't know why anybody would—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They're playing good.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no; they lost again last night.

But you know, if you go out and try to buy one of those tickets from a scalper, you know you're going to pay two or three times the cost of that. If you want to go and watch Lady Gaga or anything else, and if you don't have a ticket, you're going to pay two or three times that.

When I was a municipal councillor, I had the opportunity over many years to meet a wonderful councillor by the name of Howard Moscoe. Howard Moscoe did not shy away from things. He put himself through school, through university, his young life, by being a ticket scalper. He can tell you wonderful stories. He thought it was great free enterprise. He made thousands of dollars a week scalping tickets. To listen to his stories of how things are done and how people are willing to pay, it's truly mind-boggling.

This bill—I don't understand all of sudden why the Liberals have brought it back. This sat in limbo for months and months and months with nothing being done. I guess you're running out of legislation to talk about in the House, so I guess that's why we're here.

I commend the member from Welland; he always tells it like it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Welland has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Speaker, I'll tell you this: I'm not a shill for Ticketmaster, that's for sure. I know that there are lobbyists on this file because they did contact my office and wanted to speak to me. I have no interest whatsoever in speaking to them because I can read the legislation. I understand the pros and cons. I can analyze it without the help of high-priced lobbyists.

As I say, I have no idea who they were lobbying for. I suspect it might be Ticketmaster; I'm not sure. But let's understand one thing: Ticketmaster owns TicketsNow. I suppose this isn't so much a matter of collusion. Collusion is if Mr. Zimmer and I, as independent parties, agree to do something together, as compared to a company that owns the other company; they're one and the same.

The problem is that this legislation won't even prevent TicketsNow from selling tickets at inflated prices. All that Ticketmaster has to do is bow out of the selling of tickets at face-value prices. It's as simple as that.

As for TicketsNow and Ticketmaster, one should flesh it out and tell all of the components, because in New

Jersey, Ticketmaster had to pay the Springsteen operation \$350,000 in compensation. For an operation that is so pristine, it seems to me that they settled to the tune of over a third of a million dollars to avoid the consequences of litigation, and I understand that.

As I say, I'm not a shill for Ticketmaster. I could care less about Ticketmaster, quite frankly. I have no interest in them. I don't know them; if I did know them, I may or may not like them. Who knows? Who cares? The fact is that this legislation is grossly ineffective. It will not serve the goal that it purports to serve.

I would like to hear Mr. Zimmer, the parliamentary assistant, and his legal analysis of the bill and the legislation that it's amending, and why the government hasn't enforced that legislation.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me offer these comments. First of all, by way of background: The first legislation governing ticket speculation in Ontario was introduced in 1960. That's 50 years ago. For the last 50 years, Ontario has recognized the need to regulate and bring some order to this activity. So that legislation was introduced in 1960.

The first test case of the propriety and constitutionality of that piece of legislation was in 1967. That was the Fink case, which the member for Welland referred to, on which Mr. Justice Edson Haines offered his thoughts and analysis of the constitutionality and effect of that legislation.

Yesterday, the member for Welland referred to Justice Edson Haines and his reputation on the bench and so on. I can say that way, way back, many years ago when I was a very junior lawyer, I had occasion to appear before Mr. Justice Edson Haines—along with the senior lawyer of course; I carried the senior lawyer's briefcase and handed him his talking points, if you will. But I had occasion to sit in the courtroom and listen to that very wise-looking and indeed wise judicial authority who had a deep appreciation of the technicalities of the law and also of the social purposes of the law.

With respect to the social purposes behind the Ticket Speculation Act, let me just quote from that 1967 decision. I say to my colleagues in this chamber that the philosophy or the intent that Mr. Justice Haines described the legislation as having is really the same intent, purpose and philosophy today, albeit with some changes, and I want to talk about those changes.

The world in 1960, in terms of ticket speculation, and in 1967, when Justice Edson Haines offered his remarks, was a much smaller world. We were talking about a \$4 ticket that someone scalped for \$25. It was typically—my friend opposite referred to Howard Moscoe working his way through college and university by ticket scalping—a small, sort of one-on-one operation. An individual would get his hands on a couple of tickets—stand out in front of typically a football stadium or hockey arena and personally buy three or four tickets—and then try to peddle

them at the door for a markup as people were going in. The scalper might sell three or four tickets, make 50 or 60 bucks that night, as Howard did, put it in his pocket, pay for his tuition and away he went.

But the world has changed. Today, ticket sales for the big sports events, the big rock concerts—all the big stuff that goes on at the Air Canada Centre and the Rogers Centre and the stadiums and so on—is big, big, mega-business. Big primary operators buy blocks of tickets. But the mischief is that usually the primary ticket buyer has a subsidiary company set up. The primary ticket company is called X and the subsidiary company is called Y, and there's a business relationship between those two entities, between X and Y, the primary and the secondary.

The primary company, X, holds on to tickets. Big advertisement campaign—the concert is coming to downtown; the football game is on—you've got to have these tickets, here's the price. People call up, and those tickets are quickly sold, because a substantial portion of the tickets have been reserved for the secondary company, Y. If there's a business relationship between the primary and the secondary, between X and Y, that's a manipulation of the market, if you will, and that's the mischief that this legislation is intended to get at.

The legislation is not—I want to make it quite clear—intended to deal with the situation where my friend from Welland has tickets for a game at the Rogers Centre, because he's a great fan of sports events at the Rogers Centre. He's got two very expensive tickets—\$200 each—and he finds that he can't go because we're having a midnight sitting and he wants to be here to speak. So he calls up his personal friend—it's a relationship between the member for Welland and his friend here in town; it might be his friend from Beaches—East York—and he offers the tickets to his friend for Beaches—East York. They agree on a price and he sells it to his friend. That's not the sort of mom-and-pop small-time operation that this legislation is intended to get at. It's intended to get at those larger operations where there's a business model that has been thought through and the business model is a primary and a secondary company, a block of tickets, they've got a lock on the market and the price in the secondary market is pumped way up.

I want to remind members what the Attorney General said on second reading of this bill on October 21 here in this chamber, and then I'm going to just expand on a couple of things that I want to make really clear. He said, "Mr. Speaker, since the first reading we have been responding to concerns brought to our attention by stakeholders to ensure that the wording of this legislation properly reflects the types of arrangements we want to deter." Let me say that again: We want to make sure "that the wording of this legislation properly reflects the types of arrangements we want to deter." We do not want to deter that activity where somebody holding concert tickets, symphony tickets, rock tickets or sports tickets wants to get rid of those tickets because he or she can't use them. We are after the larger business model, primary

and secondary companies, where a huge block of tickets are obtained, where there's a relationship, an inherent and inchoate business relationship, if you think of it that way. We want to ensure that that business relationship, that business model, does not continue to create this situation where the same entity, if you will, controls the primary and the secondary markets.

As a consequence of wanting to make it very clear that we're not after the mom-and-pop operation, somebody getting rid of some tickets that they can't use that night, we are planning to introduce some amendments at the committee, amendments to the original bill that was introduced last year. I can tell you that those amendments are going to reflect this thought: We're not targeting season ticket holders selling off extra tickets at face value because they find they can't use the tickets that night. The legislation is directed to a corporate structure where there is an inherent business relationship, if you will, between a primary and a secondary operation where the tickets are sold in the secondary market at a substantially higher price than they are in the primary market. That's the mischief that this legislation is intended to deal with.

Let me go back to Mr. Justice Haines in the Fink decision, because as I said, the original piece of legislation was from 1960, and really the first case that commented on it was in 1967. I said that Justice Haines was both a superb technical lawyer and a superb observer of the social intent behind legislation. This is what he said about the intent of the legislation, staying away from the technical aspects—this is the philosophy behind the legislation then; it continues to remain the philosophy behind the legislation today. He said: "In my opinion, this act is best classified as one of regulation. It is designed to regulate the orderly sale of tickets to places of entertainment and amusement in Ontario for the benefit of those persons connected with these industries as well as for the benefit of the entire public"—that is, the entire Ontario public.

He goes on to talk about speculators, or scalpers as they're often called. He refers to them as persons who "operate to buy up varying quantities of tickets to various types of performances in order to place themselves in the positions of monopolists with respect to the resale of the tickets." That's what this legislation today is intended to get at: that inherent business-model relationship between a primary and a secondary market being effectively operated by the same entity. It places that entity in the position of a monopolist. You have no control over the price in the secondary market because the secondary market is, in effect, owned and managed by the owners of the primary market.

0940

Justice Haines then goes on to say: "By then reselling these tickets at highly inflated prices, they deprive many persons of modest means of attending certain performances, and they also cause great resentment in many of those to whom they do, in fact, sell."

We almost have a class structure kind of thing here, where people want to go to these concerts, but they have to go to the secondary market. The prices are high, high,

high, and it freezes out people of modest means who, in these tough economic times, have to spend their entertainment dollars wisely. Working people of modest means have every right to access, at a fair price, a Maple Leafs game, a football game or a rock concert. They ought not to be frozen out by monopolists.

Justice Haines then goes on to say, in a very wise statement, "The victims of these practices, if they were allowed, would be both those persons whose lives are associated with the entertainment and amusement industries as well as the entire public. In Ontario, we owe much of our cultural heritage to the performing arts and to the various spectator sports which provide enjoyment and pleasure to all of us, and it would seem appropriate to me for the Legislature to take whatever reasonable steps are necessary to protect these aspects of our lives from the dangers of unchecked ticket speculation."

Those are the words of a very wise judge, spoken in 1967, 43 years ago, about a piece of legislation that was originally introduced in 1960, 50 years ago. I say to the members of this Legislature that that philosophy is the philosophy that continues to be behind this legislation.

I've spoken about and I've made reference to our intention because when the legislation was first introduced, of course, it went out to the public. We got a lot of comments back and, as the Attorney General said on October 21, it's not our intention to go after the individual season ticket holders, for instance, who find that they can't use their tickets that evening to prevent them from disposing of those tickets.

We want to bring order and fairness to that aspect of the market that Justice Haines referred to, which, if not properly regulated and controlled, will allow monopolists into the system to control both a large primary market and an even larger secondary market because there's an inherent business relationship between the operators of the primary market and the operators of the secondary market. If it's the same person, and there's a business relationship there, of course the person operating both of those markets, given a choice, will want to sell a ticket through the secondary market and get X-plus dollars rather than sell it through the primary market and just get X dollars.

In summary, when you think about what Justice Edson Haines said, when you think about the intent behind this legislation and when you take into account the amendments that we will introduce at committee hearings, this, in its last analysis, is a piece of consumer legislation to make it fair for all Ontarians, no matter what their station in life, so that they have reasonable and fair access when they are purchasing and spending their entertainment dollars, be it on the arts and theatre and symphonies or athletic events—so that they are treated fairly in the market. That's what this legislation is all about.

I'm very pleased and very happy that our government has brought this in. I have heard from many, many people on this issue. I hear from my daughter. I hear from my daughter's friends. I hear from my nephew. I hear from constituents in Willowdale. I get emails on this. The gist of all of the comments is, "I saw an event adver-

tised"—a big sports event, a big arts or cultural event, a big concert—"and tickets were going on sale at X day at X time. I called right away and they were out of tickets. I got referred to another operation. I called there, and yes, they've got tickets, but the tickets are substantially pricier than the first company that I called." Reasonable-thinking people know and feel in their gut that that's unfair.

So here we are, 50 years after the original legislation was introduced. When the legislation was introduced, in 1960, it was a very different world. I'm repeating myself, but I want to make it very clear that in those days the typical, if you will, speculator or so-called scalper was a small operation: Get a couple of tickets and sell them—stand outside the event—to somebody going in the door. Sell them for a little extra money. Make \$50 or \$60; maybe make \$100 if you've got three or four or five tickets. But the world has changed 50 years later, and we have these big, mega-business models where the potential is that an operator can operate the primary market, advertise, put a limited number of tickets on sale through the primary market. That quickly sells out; refer the potential purchasers to the secondary market. We're talking about events at the Air Canada Centre and the Rogers Centre where 25,000 or 30,000 people attend—the big sports events, the big rock concerts. This is a big big-money operation; and we want to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and reasonable access.

This is a very good piece of consumer legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was of the opinion that the first scalping legislation was brought into Ontario around 1910—that was some research that was given to me—not 1960, as the member pointed out. I was surprised his research didn't show that legislation went back that far in our history. I would appreciate the member's comments on that. Perhaps his research on the rest of this bill is as wanting as the research on that, on the longevity of the legislation in Ontario.

What he's talking about—he's not talking about a huge number of companies; he's not talking about even a handful of companies—is one company. The only company in Ontario that has a relationship with a reseller is Ticketmaster. They have a relationship with TicketsNow. The collusion that they talk about, the block of tickets that Ticketmaster supposedly sold to TicketsNow, is a figment of someone's imagination because the Competition Bureau of Canada did an exhaustive examination of the relationship between those companies and found no examples whatsoever of collusion. They gave both those companies a clean stamp of approval.

Therefore, what this bill is designed to protect it is not going to do, because it doesn't exist in Ontario in the first place. And secondly, it is going to make TicketsNow impossible to operate in Ontario, thereby reducing competition in the secondary market. Even this government must recognize that with reduced competition you increase prices. So this legislation could very well increase prices of tickets in the province of Ontario.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Somebody here has been lobbied, extensively, I believe.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Say that outside of the House.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, I will. The member for Halton should perhaps correct his record. I just had the legislative library obtain my Hansard from yesterday and scan it for the word "collusion." The word did not appear in the Hansard search. The word "collusion" was not used by me yesterday. It was used by Mr. Chudleigh. That's obviously the spin that some lobbyist wants him to use here in the chamber.

The reality is that I'm not a shill for Ticketmaster. At the same time, I have no interest whatsoever in accepting this government's pathetic rationale or lack of rationale for this legislation because it won't address the problem. It will tune up Ticketmaster all right, but the existing legislation could do that as well because of the offence of attempting to purchase or purchasing for the purpose of reselling. In fact, that also addresses—the existing legislation—the matter of arm's-length resellers. This amendment does not address arm's-length resellers who will continue to make millions of dollars at the expense of consumers.

The other reality is that people are paying these prices. The market sustains this. These concerts, even with scalped tickets by the computer scalping process, the big corporate scalpers—people are still buying the tickets, and as I read the newspapers these concerts are sold out. What more can I say? Perhaps the performers and their corporate operations should tune in to that.

Will the member for Halton correct his record when he alleged earlier today—stated, in fact—that I used the word "collusion," but in fact it does not appear in the Hansard of yesterday's comments by me. Shame on him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a good friend who is a journalist in the state of Illinois, and he was talking to me about a story that they did a number of years ago about tickets and ticket reselling. They found one guy who had arranged to line up, and he was number one in line when tickets for a concert went on sale. He had camped out for nearly two or three days, and when he got there, anticipating that he'd be able to buy his favourite seats—front row, dead centre—he found out that all that was available were a bunch of tickets way out in the bleachers somewhere up in the nosebleed section. All the prime seats had gone. Shameful. This legislation is here to protect against that very kind of practice in which the ticket vendor just flips a whole bunch of tickets to a wholly owned subsidiary.

I think this legislation is about people like him who lined up, and not merely the ticket purchasers. What about the people who do the set-up and the takedown? Don't they deserve a share of the value in a concert? Right at the moment, if you can flip a big block of tickets, they don't get a dime. What about the people who

sell the refreshments? What about the people who act as ushers? If all you're doing is flipping your tickets to a wholly owned reseller, they don't get a dime, and that's the kind of person that this legislation needs to protect. How much money does TicketsNow pay them? Nothing; absolutely nothing.

This is 50-year-old legislation that could not anticipate the computer-driven, high-tech, high-volume, wholesale appropriation of value that basically takes from performers, promoters, exhibitors, staff and the people who attend, and just puts the money in their pocket and runs. It's time for this legislation. This is good legislation. Let's pass it now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Just a quick comment on what we've been hearing this morning. As I sit here I'm getting somewhat concerned that the proposers of this legislation have absolutely no idea what problem it is they're trying to correct. We're all talking about different things. The last comment made was about how the people in the venue of the presentation are not getting the same money they would get if every ticket had been sold by the venue itself. Of course, the money going into the venue and to the people who are performing stays the same regardless of how those tickets are sold beyond that.

The other thing I have a little problem understanding is how we have a system that allows people to take tickets and sell them for different prices. Why are the people who are providing the entertainment not selling them at the higher prices so that they could use that money to pay the people who work in the venue a little bit more money? Why are the prices set that way? Obviously there must be a reason—the scalpers who stand outside the stadium as I'm going to the ball game and buy the ticket—why they're doing that: because they weren't being sold any other way. I think we want to make sure that the legislation has to protect the consumer, that we don't turn around and make it impossible for those excess tickets to be sold at a later time so that they can at least fill the seats in the stadium and get a return for the tickets that are there.

With that, I will have an opportunity to speak to this bill a little later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Willowdale has two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Zimmer: In answer to the member from Halton, who has been grinding on now for a couple of days about why he thinks this legislation is not needed, let me refer once again to the Attorney General's remarks of October 21, when he spoke on second reading.

The member from Halton said: "There are some across the floor who would argue that stronger enforcement of existing laws should be enough, that the Ontario consumer is already adequately protected." That's the position of the member from Halton. In answer to that, the Attorney General said:

"But while ticket scalping has been illegal in Ontario for a long time"—that's obvious—"the advent of Internet ticket sales in 1996 and the development of software to defeat attempts by ticket agencies to limit Internet sales to a certain number per customer makes enforcing the existing laws extremely difficult. In addition, the maximum fines to deter scalpers have not been enough. We need to do more."

We need to do more because, as I said in my longer remarks a few minutes ago, it's a different world today than it was in 1960 and 1967, when we were dealing with mom and pop selling extra tickets outside a local event.

As the Attorney General said in his remarks, since the advent of Internet ticket sales in 1996, and the whole computer revolution and the development of software and going into your computer and buying blocks and blocks of tickets, it's a whole different order of magnitude.

The world changes, and it's incumbent upon the government to deal with the circumstances of the day. This legislation does that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. As I start, I have here a printout from the National Post, May 5, 2009. It would have been about the time this bill was introduced, and I find it interesting. It states: "Too little attention was paid last week as Ontario's Attorney General did what governments do best: pander to public perception. Seems like no issue is too small and no public misconception so stupid or wrong that it cannot be answered with legislation or regulation." He's talking about the day that this is introduced.

I can take from that, then, that the author of that in the National Post had read the legislation and come up with—I wouldn't say "identical," but somewhat the conclusion I came up with as I was reading the legislation. I wanted to refer to it, if I could. The explanatory note, of course, is always the first place I look when I receive a new piece of legislation, to explain what it is that needs doing and how this bill proposes to do that. I read from the explanatory note:

"The bill amends the Ticket Speculation Act to provide that it is an offence for related primary and secondary sellers to make available for sale in Ontario tickets for admission to the same event. An individual who is convicted of this offence is liable to a maximum fine of \$5,000; a corporation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000. The Attorney General"—and I think this is the interesting part; this is in the explanation—"is given the power to make regulations exempting any person or class of persons from the act and prescribing conditions attaching to an exemption."

1000

We already have the rules against the reselling of tickets, the scalping outside the venue, and yet it's not working well enough. Well, I expect that that may have something to do with the fact that it's not being enforced at all, so we wouldn't expect it to work really well. We

are now, it would appear, applying a piece of legislation to certain groups or types of people that are different from the rest, because it appears the rest is already looked after and, in case we aren't hitting just the target we want to, we want to give the Attorney General the ability to, by regulation, readjust it to get just the right people we want.

I think the other thing that's rather interesting and that I have some problems with is the actual wording of the act and how we define what the seller is. From my colleague from Halton, there's been some discussion about that: how this act is really written to apply to only one individual company and a subsidiary of that company and how that works with the rest of the secondary sellers they work with.

Section 2.1 of the act states, "No primary seller shall make a ticket available for sale for admission to an event in Ontario if a ticket for admission to that same event is or has been made available for sale by a secondary seller who is related to the primary seller." I'm not sure how that works. How does the secondary seller get to sell the ticket before the primary seller? I think there was a case where that had happened because of a computer glitch, but the truth of the matter is I don't know why you would have a bill that says the primary seller can't sell any tickets to a secondary seller. I guess that would mean that, upon someone who was related to anyone who owned a primary seller's establishment scalping a ticket to the event, the primary seller could no longer sell all the tickets to that event.

The second one is the prohibition on the secondary seller: "No secondary seller shall make a ticket available for sale for admission to an event in Ontario if a ticket for admission to the same event is or has been made available for sale by a primary seller who is related to the secondary seller." Again, we run into the same problem, as we know.

We haven't seen enforcement of the present law. We can have a debate about whether it was from 1910 or 1960 or whenever it was, but I can assure you that the amount of enforcement of that has been somewhat limited. So we have here a new law that, it would appear, isn't going to be enforced either.

As I was coming here to speak to this bill this morning, I found it rather interesting that just prior to us speaking to this bill, we had two closure motions on two other pieces of legislation. When you cut off debate on a piece of legislation, the assumption is that the government feels that the legislative time that is required to debate it further is going to be too great, based on the importance of the bill and the importance of further discussion. They believe that they've heard enough. They're going to move forward with the bill, get it done and not use more of the House's time.

Having done that for two bills, one of them being, I believe, a government accountability bill, it would seem to me that it's hard to understand how the government decided that this bill is the one that requires all this debate, even to the point where I kind of wonder. When this is a two-paragraph bill that seems to direct its enforcement or its discussion towards one individual com-

pany, it would seem to me that that could have been put in a bill with something else that would then not require the House to be debating just this bill that, in the end, as the National Post says, is going to do very little in solving a problem that, it appears, the government doesn't understand.

Yet there have been other bills that have gone before it and that were very large issues that didn't seem to warrant having a bill of their own. They were snuck into another bill, or put into another bill for debate, along with numerous others, an omnibus bill which, of course, some would call housecleaning. But if they're major issues, then obviously that's not housecleaning; it's a way of quickly getting it through with little debate.

One that I want to just touch on and I want to put on the record: Just a few weeks ago, the government forced through an omnibus bill that included changes to the livestock compensation for farmers. It's a very important issue to our rural community and to our farmers, but apparently not important enough to have a bill, as we have this bill, and have some fulsome debate on whether they're doing the right thing.

In that bill, in that part of that one omnibus bill, they took out the compensation for livestock; they took it out of legislation and put it in regulation. They also added it and took it out of a direct payment to the damage, and they put it in—it would be part of the AgriStability program, which of course would then, at the end of the year—if they had got a payout, they'd have to put it in, and that would be deducted from their AgriStability payments. They were also going to pay—they've changed the rules so that they don't pay for the full loss of the value of the animal, only for the market value of the animal if it had been sold as it was the day it was killed.

Another thing, I think, that was very important, as I mentioned, about independent bills and putting in an omnibus bill—five years ago, this government decided that they were going to change the—and the reason this comes up, of course, is that just last week, we had a municipal election. I want to commend and congratulate all the people in Oxford county who put their name forward and also all those who were elected to represent the local municipalities for the next four years.

But I want to point out that the change from three to four years to municipal government elections was not a bill. It was part of an omnibus budget bill, in fact. When we discussed the budget—and the Speaker will be aware that there are a lot of things that warrant a lot of discussion—of course, we didn't get the opportunity to have any extensive debate on the term of office, and that made a great difference to a lot of people in Ontario. Yet, we didn't get to discuss that—yet again, too, on the other bills that they put forward that don't require bills of their own.

I want to point out that in large part, this bill is actually unnecessary. Today, in the province of Ontario, it's illegal already—and again, I go back to that—to sell tickets above their face value as a reseller. The problem here is not that we don't have the law; it's that the province doesn't enforce it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Just like cigarettes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It's a similar problem that we're having with the illegal cigarettes, just as you mentioned, my colleague from Halton. Fifty per cent of the cigarettes sold in this province today, according to the information I have, are being sold illegally. We know that and we know there's a problem, but the government refuses to address it. The Auditor General in his report said that there is at least half a billion dollars a year of taxes lost because of these illegal sales.

I think, to be honest about it—not that I don't think we shouldn't make sure that people are protected in the sale of tickets to special events, but I think it's also important that we go after the problem of illegal cigarettes. First of all, we have people smoking. The government keeps telling us that a way to reduce smoking is to increase taxes on cigarettes so that people find it more difficult to buy them. That way, we will see a reduction in smoking. But in fact, if they are buying them illegally, which 50% of them now are, then we're going to see great increases and no monitoring of government. We'll see figures coming out of how well we're doing in smoking cessation, and yet at the same time, smoking is increasing.

I can understand the frustration that people feel when they decide to buy a ticket and they're told that they can't buy the ticket for the event at the rate they thought they could, and then they have to go out and pay more money. They can still get a ticket but they have to pay more for it. I can imagine that it's a little like voting for a government, when they promise they aren't going to raise your taxes and then turn around right after the election and do exactly that. They told you what they were going to do, and then when they turn around, they don't.

I imagine it's like believing the same man when four years later, he says he isn't going to raise your taxes, and this time, "I really mean it." That's what he said. But we all know what happened. We're being hit with the HST, the tax that increases the cost of hundreds of items for people every day.

I think it's nice that the members from the other side finally realized that the people of Ontario are not an endless source of money and that they are trying to do something to protect their wallets. But I think they're looking in the wrong place. I think the people of Ontario are going to be smart enough to realize that the money they're losing—the money they're paying for the extra HST, the money they're paying from the health tax, the money they're paying for other taxes that the province keeps putting on them—is a far greater problem, in my community, than the fact that when they want to buy tickets to an event at the Air Canada Centre, they have to pay more for the tickets than they had originally envisioned.

1010

I just want to point out that when Minister Bentley introduced this bill, he said, "Ontarians work hard. They work to support their families and support our economy." And this is a quote from Hansard. "As we all work our way through these lean economic times, we must be able to count on principles that have carried us through chal-

lenging times in the past, and one of those principles is the importance of fair business practices.

"Recently, Ontario consumers have joined the chorus of voices expressing concern and frustration over unfair ticket resale practices in Ontario. Their frustration stems from the concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to popular Ontario events on the primary market, and then, on the secondary market at much higher prices.

"The McGuinty government wants to do something about this, and so today we're moving forward on our commitment to protect Ontario consumers."

But just yesterday in this House, we learned about many local electricity distributor companies that have had to attend fundraisers given by the Liberal Party just to be heard by the McGuinty government. I believe that's wrong. But the reason I put those two together is that I think there is a direct connection. When it was found that the utility companies were putting a lot of money into the government coffers—I shouldn't say the government coffers; the Liberal Party coffers—and when they were asked about it, they said, "We didn't know we donated to the Liberal Party. We were just paying so we could meet with the government members." If that is what has happened and if that's what they were led to believe, to me that is far worse than someone who intends to go to an event with the thought that they're going to pay a certain price and who then finds out, once they've decided they want to go to the event, that they have to pay more because the primary tickets that were allotted are gone so they have to buy it from someone else who already owns the ticket. To me, they still have the choice to decide not to go to the event. But these people here that paid money to go to meet with the government, hopefully to get the ear of the minister as to what they're going to do to their sector, are now told, "No, no. That money you spent wasn't for that. In fact, to be truthful, we weren't even listening when you were there. It was really just a fundraising thing."

We heard yesterday in the House, in fact, that the leader of the third party had a number of letters from people who had bought those tickets and who said that they had no idea that they were going to a fundraising event and actually contributing—particularly contributing to by-elections that were nowhere near their sphere of governance for that utility. To me, we need legislation to keep that from happening much more than we need this piece of legislation that is not going to have an impact on the industry at all.

Another couple of places where I think we need some control on what government can do is when they introduced the eco fees. Not only was that wrong—and they realized that shortly afterwards, when one of the major chains, Canadian Tire, refused to collect them any more. Then the government changed their mind. But what I find troubling about that is that no one seems to want to talk about those fees that were collected from July 1 to whatever date it was that the government decided not to implement the eco fees. We seem to have forgotten about that.

It seems to me that when I go somewhere and buy something, and then if I don't get the product, I have a right to my money back. And if I gave more money than I was supposed to pay for that, then I think that I have a right, and consumers have a right, and the people in Oxford county have a right, to get their change back. But nobody seems to talk about that.

I just want to point out, too, that one of the things that I think is important—you may know that I do try and go back to my riding on a regular basis, something like every evening, and I come back here every morning. One of the reasons I do that and the thing I like about that is it gives the person an opportunity to talk to the people in their riding as we're having these discussions here today.

I can tell you that in the last week or two, or since May, as I go to Tim Hortons to have my coffee—and I'm not sure I want to be that commercial about it; as I go to the coffee shop to have my coffee, when I talk to people, the number one issue that they want this government to deal with is not the issue that is in this bill before us today. There are a lot of things that they think are far more important to deal with than the issue of overpaying for their tickets.

I just want to list a few of them: the ever-increasing cost of hydro; they can't understand how the government can allow that to happen and, furthermore, they don't even understand why it's going up. They want to know why all these extra charges are appearing on their bill to cover the cost of government policies that had been added. Whether they're the right policies or not is questionable, but the cost of them is added to the hydro bill.

They want to know about the HST and why, all of a sudden, they have to pay HST on the debt retirement charge that the provincial government said years ago shouldn't have any tax on it. Now, all of a sudden, we have 18% provincial tax on it through the HST.

There's also the challenge of the fundraising in our schools that they have to worry about, where they have to raise money for things that used to be part of the education system.

The list goes on and on of things the people of Ontario, the people in Oxford county think that we should be debating rather than what we're doing right here.

I will not be voting for the bill, because I really believe that the bill does absolutely nothing to solve the problem. One of the challenges that you face if you vote for the bill, even if it does nothing, is that the government goes away and the people of Ontario believe that they have solved the problem. The truth of the matter is, if it takes as long for the next review as it has taken for this one, the people of Ontario, by that time, will realize that this bill has done nothing more than the previous legislation for the problem that they're trying to address.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce two people from my riding who represent Community and Primary Health Care. I'd like to introduce Tracey Lirette and Jean Perry.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the west members' gallery, we have from the York Region Children's Aid Society president Rev. M.J. Perry and executive director Patrick Lake.

In the east members' gallery, from the College of Chiropodists of Ontario: Bob Goldberg, president; Colin McQuistan; Donna Coyne; Esrick Quintyn—all members of council; Felecia Smith, CEO and registrar. From the Ontario Society of Chiropodists: John Infanti, president. From the Ontario Podiatric Medical Association: Bruce Ramsden, president of that organization. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's my pleasure today to introduce visitors from the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association. Bryan Bedard and Joanne Bedard were parents of young Katelyn. Carolyn Mayea, Annette Martin, Melba Bedard, Rene Bedard, Jackie Leardi, Sadie Carnochan and Andrea Sulyok are here today in support of Bill 80 and for the event that the member for Oakville and I are hosting in room 163, starting at 11 o'clock, to show you how easy it is to donate to bone marrow and stem cell research.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like to introduce Mike and Kim Smyth from Oakville. They're in the west members' gallery. Unfortunately, their son, David, recently passed away from leukemia while awaiting a stem cell match. They're here today to spread awareness about the need to grow our bone marrow registry.

The donor clinic is being held in room 163 today. I'd urge all members and staff under the age of 50 to attend the clinic.

Applause.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I thought that standing ovation was for me, Mr. Speaker. I joke, of course.

I rise today to introduce Colleen Hochgeschurz, mother of page Carina. Today is Carina's last day as a page, and I want everyone to know that I'm considering hiring her on full time here at Queen's Park to help me in the future. She has done such a great job.

I also want to introduce my friend Paul Virgin from Almonte, who is here today from my riding to participate in Advocis Day here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Today we have here students from the public affairs and policy management program at Carleton University, which we know is located in Ottawa Centre. Please welcome Asietu Numekevor, Sheliza Esmail, Kira McClenaghan, Lauren Tarasuk, Garima Talwar and Blair Newbold to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Today my page, Nicholas Waltenbury, is the lead page. Here to celebrate on his last day are his mom, Dawn, who's up in the public gallery; his dad, Al, who's in the members' gallery; and his brother Spencer, who we seem to have lost but is somewhere in the Legislature.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Ms. Viji Antony, the mother of page Jonathan Antony, in the public gallery. Please welcome Viji.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Today is Advocis Day, and we want to welcome all the members from Advocis.

I do want to pay special tribute to Kris Birchard, who's here—he's the immediate past chair of the national board of directors—and also Greg Pollock, who's the president and CEO of Advocis. I hope that all members will meet with members from Advocis today and, in particular, go to the reception here at Queen's Park this evening.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to introduce my son Kennedy. We're a day late for the bring-your-kid-to-work day, but that's a Duguid thing, I guess.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce a very good friend of mine, Kirk Wrinn, who is visiting from Ottawa today for Advocis Day. Kirk, welcome to Queen's Park again.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am really delighted to welcome the president of the Canadian Polish Congress, Mr. Jan Cytowski. He's inviting all the members to the Polish Independence Day celebrations. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and page Sanjay Pavone, I'd like to welcome his mother, Dr. Rosemarie Lall, to the public galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Brampton West and page Harnameh Dhawan, we'd like to welcome his class visiting Queen's Park today from Robert H. Lagerquist Senior Public School in Brampton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome the parents of page Bridget Heeman, Florence and Rudy Heeman. As well, if you ever need strawberries and you're in the London area, make sure you visit Heeman's—great strawberries. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a parliamentary delegation from the assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, led by Assembly President His Excellency Trajko Veljanovski. The delegation is accompanied by Ljubica Damjanovska, consul general of the Republic of Macedonia, Toronto. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier: Acting Premier, why are emergency patients at Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga being treated in the hospital's garage?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My understanding is that is simply not the case.

Our government has made a number of investments in health care to help reduce wait times in emergency rooms. We have had the opportunity to make investments to reduce wait times, not just in emergency rooms but across a range of surgical procedures as well as across a range of other services that are available to Ontarians.

Two days ago, the Minister of Health informed the province that more than five million Ontarians have electronic health records, which will help with the efficiency of our system.

No doubt more needs to be done, but these investments, these choices, are the right choices for a better health care system for all Ontarians.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: With all due respect to the Acting Premier, it's obviously not the right choice to be using a garage to treat patients at Credit Valley Hospital. If the minister denies this, I'd suggest that either he or the health minister make a field trip there at once.

We have found out that the Credit Valley Hospital is using its garage as a so-called treatment centre. How do we know this? We were informed by Mississauga families and then we asked. In an email confirming this, the hospital's chief communication officer tries to boast that they've renovated the garage "to include heating and other necessary utilities for patient care," but photographs show that leaves on the floor of what patients locally will now call the McGuinty Wing hardly show that this is an appropriate place to treat patients.

Minister, I ask you: What makes you think it acceptable to treat Mississauga and local families in a dirty garage?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As we are redeveloping that hospital, a hospital that needed redevelopment, a number of interim steps have been taken which, as I understand it, have been approved by the board of the hospital and are seen as temporary solutions to overcrowding in the emergency room. The funding that we have approved will help redevelop that hospital and assure those patients who use that hospital that they have the best opportunity and continue to have the best access to care in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Hold on a second here, Acting Premier. A few moments ago, you said this wasn't true; now you're saying it is a temporary solution. Quite frankly, Mississauga families aren't going to be impressed to see the Deputy Premier speaking out of both sides of his mouth within two minutes when it comes to patient care in Mississauga.

Yesterday, we demonstrated that about \$3.7 billion in McGuinty government waste, like eHealth and the LHINs, could have gone into front-line patient care. Today, we find out that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. is back up to their old tricks, hiring an untendered consultant for \$12,000 a week to be something called a senior financial adviser: yet another scandal and waste at the OLG while Mississauga and area families are being treated in a garage at Credit Valley Hospital.

What happened to your priorities? How can you defend—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Acting Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only one speaking out of both sides of his mouth is the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to cut \$3 billion out of health care. He would attempt—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Nepean. The member from Simcoe North. The member from Halton. The member from Renfrew. The member from Halton and the member from Simcoe North again.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Talk about speaking out of both sides of his mouth: This member was part of a government that closed hospitals in Ontario. We've opened them. That government didn't make provision for enough doctors for Ontarians; today, more than one million more Ontarians have access to a doctor. He was part of a government that fired nurses—6,200; we've hired 10,000.

There are enormous choices to be made in the provision of health care in this province. We've made the investments to build a better system and a stronger system for all Ontarians and undo the damage that that party—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My next question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Earlier this week, the Ontario Electrical League attended consultations held by the College of Trades appointment council in Ottawa. Shortly after that, in the media, Pat Dillon, the chair of the appointment council, attacked the OEL for its position on apprenticeship ratios. The Ontario Electrical League has responded by saying, "It is completely unacceptable for a public appointee"—Mr. Dillon—"to smear stakeholder organizations that appear before them.... [He] cannot continue in this position, and we ... call for his resignation."

Minister, has Mr. Dillon now offered to resign? If not, are you going to hold him accountable?

Hon. John Milloy: I find it interesting that the members across the way can't take yes for an answer when it comes to the issue of apprenticeship ratios. We have had discussion and debate in this chamber for a number of years about apprenticeship ratios. The government has put together the College of Trades so that they can go out and undertake a wide range of consultations on the issue of apprenticeship ratios. We welcome input from all sides so that they can move forward with a solution that is fair, a solution that makes sense and a solution that is going to help build the apprenticeship system here in the province of Ontario.

I'm proud of the work that's being undertaken by the College of Trades. They are reaching far and wide. There

have been ongoing consultations across the province and we look forward to them coming forward with a fair and reasoned approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: No wonder the minister avoided my question—this isn't about the consultations. It's about the person you have appointed to head up these consultations, and it certainly appears that the game is fixed.

We know who Pat Dillon is: He's the head of the so-called Working Families Coalition, an American-style group that colluded with the McGuinty Liberals on \$7 million of attack ads against PC candidates in the last two elections. It has become so clear that Mr. Dillon is so much a Liberal partisan and that he wears so many hats that he is not capable of representing the interests of Ontario families at large. His job is to listen to stakeholders like the Ontario Electrical League, to listen to their issues on the apprenticeship ratio. Just because they have views like us—that you need to modernize—Pat Dillon shut them down.

He is not capable of doing his job. He is a Liberal partisan—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Of course we're aware of Pat Dillon. He was appointed to the WSIB by the Conservative Party when they were in power.

Pat Dillon is part of a group representative of the apprenticeship system and the skilled trades system across this province that has been asked to look at a series of complex issues related to apprenticeships. Let me share with the member who some of the other individuals are. The chair of the group—it's not Mr. Dillon; the member was wrong when he said that—is Rod Cameron, who's a retired former dean of technology at Fanshawe College and a motor vehicle mechanic. We also have Mr. Hugh Laird, the executive director of the Interior Systems Contractors Association. We have Gail Smyth, the executive director of Skills Canada—Ontario, who was recently in this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's be clear: Pat Dillon chaired the Ottawa session and then was shortly in the media thereafter, attacking one of the very stakeholders appearing before the committee.

What has become clear is that the minister has no intention of firing Mr. Dillon, because you dispatch Mr. Dillon to attack your critics in a partisan manner while you pretend to take the high road. Senior McGuinty Liberals like Don Guy and the member for Vaughan have orchestrated the Working Families Coalition to campaign on your behalf. Quite frankly, Mr. Dillon is so focused on being the Liberal attack dog, he is not capable of doing the job that you've given to him. He is clearly in a conflict of interest.

Minister, are you so deep in the pockets of the special interest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

Minister, will you do the right thing? There is a clear conflict of interest. Will you show Mr. Dillon the door today?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: I would point out that Mr. Dillon comes from an organization that represents 150,000 apprentices in the province of Ontario. I have been very proud of our government's record in terms of building apprenticeship in this province. We want to make sure that we have voices around the table that represent important sectors, and I consider 150,000 apprentices an important sector of this economy.

Let me tell you who else is sitting around the table. I mentioned Gail Smyth, who heads up an organization that reaches out every year to tens of thousands of young people in this province to convince them of the value of skilled trades. I can talk about Al West, vice-president of K.J. Beamish Construction. Al West represents the small business community in this province. I can talk about Norm Wolfson, a partner in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is to the Acting Premier. Last year, when British Columbia announced plans to harmonize their sales tax, this government predicted big success for Premier Gordon Campbell and claimed that other provinces would also be following Ontario's lead. Does the McGuinty government still stand by this assessment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government is committed to creating jobs in Ontario and fostering a climate of growth as we move forward. The leader of the third party may want to ignore the fact that most of the country now is harmonized. There are obviously challenges with this in the sense that we have to help people understand the long-term benefits that have been pointed out by a range of groups.

We're moving forward with a plan to create jobs. It's about jobs. It's about jobs for unemployed auto workers and unemployed steelworkers. It's about a better future for their children and their grandchildren. Governments take tough and important decisions. These are the right choices for a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: At this time last year, the McGuinty government predicted Manitoba and PEI would soon follow BC and slap the HST on their residents, but those governments rejected the scheme. This government also predicted that residents in BC and here in Ontario would learn to love the HST. Instead, people are rejecting an unfair scheme that makes their lives much more difficult, tougher and tougher at times when things are very difficult already.

I ask the government one more time: Since they got this so very, very wrong, why are they still so certain that they're right?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government has taken a stand to create jobs. That is the most important thing we can do. The leader of the third party may say what she wants. She may not be prepared to take difficult decisions to help Ontario families get through this. We recognize the importance of ensuring that Ontarians have a more competitive economy. We will continue to work with all Ontarians to build that better economy for a brighter future. It's about a more competitive tax system. It's about more investments in our education system. It's about more spaces in post-secondary education. It's about a better and more competitive health care system.

All in all, difficult decisions have to be made by governments. We take those decisions and we look forward to having the opportunity to have the people of Ontario have a say in this, as they have up until now, as we build that better future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The soon-to-be-former Premier Campbell got in trouble because he didn't listen to the families in his province who were struggling through tough times. Here in Ontario, this government continues to tell struggling families that the HST is somehow going to create 600,000 jobs, but more and more Ontarians continue to get layoff notices right here. They're told that the HST will save money, but the average family in Ontario is short \$800 a year because of the HST. When will this government finally acknowledge that all their HST predictions amount to nothing more than a hill of beans?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As that member is determined to not be fully candid, as she was earlier this week, in all of these issues, this government is committed to building a stronger economy with more jobs for all Ontarians. We won't shrink from that responsibility.

I invite her to listen to some of her own supporters and hear what they have to say. Hugh Mackenzie supports the plan. He said, "Ontario's 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction for the next few years. It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies.... It increases support for low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario's consumption tax."

These are difficult choices. Premier McGuinty makes difficult choices to build a better future, whether it's fixing the health care system or building a better education system. That's what the next election is about. We look forward to that election and the opportunity to take our case to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. People across Canada are tired of out-of-touch governments. They are tired of them—tired of arrogant governments as well. They've seen friends and

family members lose jobs all too often. They see that they're one paycheque away from losing the house or losing the car or having their hydro cut off.

When they look to their government, they see yet another consultant earning \$12,000 a week. They see public money flowing to the Liberal Party and empty promises about half a million jobs that are somehow expected to be created.

We've been putting forward a very simple proposal to actually make life easier for the people of this province. Why does this government stubbornly refuse to take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has cut taxes for all Ontarians. This government has provided the most generous sales tax credit in the country. This government has taken the funds of \$4 billion from the federal government, and it is giving it back to the people of Ontario to help us readjust to this.

This government is about creating jobs. It's about making sure that we have a brighter future for our children. We provided the northern Ontario credit and for industry an industrial energy policy. We provided a property tax credit, an energy credit for seniors, which that member and her party voted against.

We've brought forward the right package of changes to help build a stronger economy and a brighter future for Ontarians as we come out of this very, very difficult economic period.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Michelle Snow from Thornton says it better than I ever could. She writes: "Dalton McGuinty needs to know"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that, even though she's quoting, she should use a title.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —"that Ontario families are still struggling...."

"With skyrocketing hydro, it is making it tough for families to live with the basic necessities of life—slap the unnecessary HST on to that, and surviving has become that much tougher."

Instead of telling women like Michelle that they're wrong and that Premier McGuinty knows better, why doesn't the government simply listen and take the HST off of Michelle's hydro bills and everyone else's?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me just tell the member opposite what Richard Koroscil says; he's from Hamilton: "At the end of the day, it's big-time savings for businesses and ultimately the consumer. We recognize this is a big challenge and a big step forward in how we do business, but it's an important step and probably one of the most important steps we've made over the last 10 to 15 years."

Here's what John Voortman, an entrepreneur in the Leader of the Opposition's riding, says: "The HST will benefit us in the building of our plant and in buying our equipment. The money we'll be saving will enable us to do more business and hire more employees."

This is all about making decisions; it's all about leadership. It's not about pandering. It's about a brighter

future. It's about more jobs. It's about better jobs for all Ontarians as we move forward in the 21st century.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Ontario's Premier McGuinty seems to be the only Premier left who hasn't got the message yet. People are struggling and they're tired of being ignored.

Maureen Ross writes this: "I just don't think anyone is listening. I would be really happy to think someone cared about the working person."

What will it take to get the McGuinty Liberals to care?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I would rely on a fellow named Michael Oliphant, from the Daily Bread Food Bank, who says, "The sales tax credit is a sensible, forward-looking way to deal with (single sales tax) and could become an important long-term piece of the economic security puzzle for poor people in the future."

You know, there is another government in the land that has an HST. That's the government of Nova Scotia, an NDP government. Not only did they not get rid of it, not only did they not keep their commitment to take it off of energy; they raised the tax by two percentage points.

Governments have difficult choices to make. This government, this party and our leader are prepared to take our case to the people of Ontario: a case for building jobs, better education, better schools, cleaner air and a healthier future for all Ontarians.

1100

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, yesterday in Hong Kong, the Premier announced a new \$30-million program to award full academic scholarships worth as much as \$40,000 each per year to international students. My question is simple: Why is the Premier using tuition dollars from Ontario students and tax dollars from Ontario families to put people who don't even live in this province through university?

Hon. John Milloy: I think all of us should welcome the news yesterday that the Premier announced 75 scholarships—I think the honourable member's math is a little wrong—at \$40,000 a year to attract the best and the brightest Ph.D. students from around the world to Ontario. As part of our Open Ontario plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members from Oxford, Halton, Nepean—Carleton.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Halton again and Renfrew.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Please continue.

Hon. John Milloy: I cannot believe the gall of the party over there. I heard a member shout, "When are you going to stand up for Ontario?" We have one of the best

post-secondary education systems in the world. We want to strengthen that system by attracting the best and the brightest. We want to open our province to Ph.D. students from across the world, so that they can come to Ontario, they can enhance our system and they can serve as a magnet to draw more international students here and make sure that we continue to have the best—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I say to the minister, it's clear that Premier McGuinty's priorities are not the priorities of Ontario families. Ontario families are worried about the cost of tuition. They're worried about whether their children can get into university, whether there are enough spaces, and they're worried about where they're going to find the money to get their children through university.

Premier McGuinty's priorities are to give \$40,000 a year for scholarships to foreign students while Ontario students are leaving school with tens of thousands of dollars of debt to pay back. Will the minister commit to scrapping this program and redirect the money to Ontario students who are having to find the money to pay their own way through school?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just say to the honourable members, perhaps they had a little too much sugar on their Heeman's berries this morning.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: The nerve of that member. We are a government which has introduced changes to bring about the most generous—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: We've put in place the most generous student assistance program in the country. That member was part of a government which cut student aid, which saw tuition go through the roof and which cut funding to our colleges and universities.

Do you know what the Council of Ontario Universities is saying about today's announcement? They are saying, "Ontario's productivity and competitiveness in the 21st century depend on a highly skilled and culturally diverse workforce, to which these scholarships for graduate students will contribute."

We will be attracting the best and the brightest to our province. All they want to do is take this province backward.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The cost of nuclear power is skyrocketing, putting more pressure on struggling ratepayers. The refurbishment of the Bruce A nuclear reactor is \$2 billion over budget. The Ontario Clean Air Alliance says that the cost of building Darlington could be as high as \$35 billion.

The anticipated cost of building a new reactor at Darlington was so high that the government delayed the project.

Why won't the government consider allowing more affordable green energy to replace the Pickering nuclear station when it closes in 2020, instead of building expensive new nuclear reactors?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're the government that's leading the world in attracting renewable energy to Ontario. On top of that, we're doing it over the daily objections of his leader, who stands in her place every single day opposing the investments we're making in renewable energy, opposing the investments we're making in conservation and, yes, opposing the investments we're making in adding 8,000 new megawatts of power to our system. That's helping us as we adjust to some of the challenges when it comes to renewing our energy infrastructure, giving us more time to make those adjustments.

There's a very serious wedge developing between that leader and her critic. That leader stands up day after day opposing renewable energy; that critic stands up in his place saying we should do more.

We're leading the world when it comes to attracting new renewable energy to this province, and we're very proud of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This minister has missed a career in stand-up and really has to go do it.

What the NDP wants is a discussion of the cost of nuclear power and the alternatives. This fall, the minister launched what he called a public consultation about the future mix of electricity in Ontario, but immediately said that nuclear power was not negotiable.

Why won't the government at least permit an independent review of the nuclear cost estimates and the green power alternatives?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the member's comments about my sense of humour, but at the same time, I really have to let the member opposite and his party know: There is no such thing as an energy fairy in the province of Ontario. I think they still believe that there is. I think they still believe that somehow an energy fairy is going to come down and provide us with the baseload capacity that we need to provide the backbone of our energy system that nuclear is.

Nuclear power is an important part of the backbone of our energy system. It's part of our baseload capacity. It's clean. It's affordable. It's reliable. Any system of energy in this province, other than in the make-believe world of the NDP, would require further investments in nuclear to ensure that we're renewing our aging infrastructure, to ensure that we move forward with the purchase of two new renewables, as part of a very vibrant mix that includes renewables, that includes other sources of clean power, that includes a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1110

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. My constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham remain very concerned about road safety, especially as we get closer to the holiday season. We all know that drinking and driving is a deadly combination.

I attended the 2010 provincial launch of Operation Red Nose, held at Queen's Park yesterday, like many of my colleagues. This event was launched in partnership with the Ontario Safety League and the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Operation Red Nose is a free, confidential designated-driver service where a team of dedicated volunteers drive an individual home if that person thinks they cannot drive themselves. This initiative is certainly an important one, but it is not universally available. Could the minister tell us what else we are doing in Ontario to combat drunk driving?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for the question, and I especially want to thank the Ontario Safety League, the Insurance Bureau of Canada and the thousands of volunteers who make Operation Red Nose work. I see this campaign as part of a whole strategy to fight drinking and driving. We all know that drinking and driving is unacceptable.

In August, we brought into effect the rule that all drivers 21 years of age and under cannot have any blood alcohol in their systems. All novice drivers in the graduated licensing system will face escalating sanctions for repeat violations under their graduated licence conditions. We also introduced the ignition interlock program for drivers convicted of an impaired driving offence for the first time, and we know that that ignition interlock system will help change behaviour. That's all in the aid of fighting drinking and driving.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: You and I both know that driving while under the influence of alcohol is a crime. It is an irresponsible and dangerous act that can result in fatalities. Each holiday season there are preventable deaths. We must do everything we can to reduce deaths and injuries on Ontario's roads. I know road safety is an important mission for this government and, in fact, Ontario has among the safest roads in North America.

At the Operation Red Nose launch, their message was that we cannot accept the status quo. We must continue to improve road safety in Ontario through public education and safety awareness all year long, but especially during the holiday season. Could the minister explain what this government is doing to stop and prevent drinking and driving during the holiday season?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much; it's a great question.

I was there yesterday with some colleagues from the Legislature, at their press conference, and I want to commend the Ontario Safety League and the Insurance

Bureau of Canada for the launch of what they call the Operation Red Nose campaign. These organizations deserve commendation. Thousands of volunteers have dedicated countless hours to make this program a success.

Operation Red Nose is a volunteer driving service provided during the holiday season to any partygoer who has been drinking or who does not feel fit to drive their own vehicle. Donations the volunteers receive go to support youth and amateur sports programs across Ontario. Last year, more than 5,340 Ontarians relied on this program.

Our government continues to fight against drinking and driving. Since 2008, Ontario has doubled its support for local police officers who perform RIDE checks. There's really no—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister for Government Services: In the coming constituency week, members will be taking part in Remembrance Day ceremonies honouring those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for the freedoms that we enjoy here. Thanks to a resolution by the member for Simcoe North, military families receive a portion of the sale for each "support our troops" licence plate that is purchased. Since these plates were introduced, the price of the regular plates has increased by \$5 and personalized plates by \$22. Can the minister tell us why all of that increase in what Ontarians pay for these designated plates is now being pocketed by the government of Ontario and is not being passed on to the military families?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: We are very proud of the work that our Canadian Forces do, and anything that we can do to recognize their work we are always prepared to do.

I want to tell you that when I became the Minister of Transportation—there was some work done by the members on the other side, but we were the first government to actually introduce the veterans' plates. We also introduced the yellow licence plate sticker. Then, this summer, I actually went to Petawawa and we opened a ServiceOntario centre there as well, so we have done a lot.

The work that we have done with regard to the yellow ribbon licence plates is very well recognized by the Canadian Forces Personnel Assistance Fund. When I was in Petawawa actually, people came to me, unsolicited, and they told me they very well appreciate the contribution that we are making towards these licence plates.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Not my question, and certainly not the answer to my question.

Ontario families are willing to pay the additional fee for these plates because they believe that the additional contribution will go to veterans and military families. In fact, the government's take for the HST grab on these plates is twice what military families receive on the

regular plates and five times more than what they receive on personalized plates.

The finance minister recently committed to refund the HST on poppies. That was the right thing to do. My question now is: Will the Minister of Finance turn over the HST Ontarians pay for “support our troops” plates so that those funds can be passed on to veterans and military families?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I will pass this question to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Those funds go to invest in hospitals and long-term-care facilities. Those funds are important to the future of Ontario and for our veterans and their families.

We were pleased to be able to remove the HST from poppies and to persuade the federal government of the importance of that. That was the right and appropriate thing to do in the circumstances.

As when we created the Highway of Heroes, this government will continue to work with veterans, with our troops in Afghanistan and with all Canadians. We join all Canadians in saluting the heroism and valour of our troops, both present and past.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the Minister of Energy: When the Liberals proposed the Oakville gas-fired power plant, the NDP said that this plant wasn't necessary. At that time, the Minister of Energy made an argument along the lines of, “The energy fairy says we don't need a plant here.” The energy fairy has landed. The energy fairy is bringing a big bill.

TransCanada announced that they have “commenced negotiations with the OPA on a settlement which would terminate the contract and compensate TransCanada for the economic consequences associated....”

Will the minister reveal to Ontario families how big a bill they're stuck with?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm very pleased that this government was able to announce, not long ago, to the people of Oakville that we would no longer need to move forward with this gas plant. A lot of that came about as a result of the work of our good friend the member from Oakville, who worked very hard on that file.

But it also came about because of the hard work done by this government over the last seven years that has created 8,000 new megawatts of power, a 20% increase in the power capacity of this province. That is what enabled us to have some more flexibility. That is what enabled us to move towards a transmission solution for the Oakville area and the southwest GTA rather than have to pursue a 950-megawatt gas plant.

I'll speak more in the supplementary about the discussions going on with TransCanada, but this is a good-news story for the people of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You know, when you bungle something, when you don't listen to advice and you incur

a liability for the people of Ontario, that's not a good-news story.

Right at the beginning, the NDP said this plant was not needed. You didn't have to be a genius to figure that out. The reality is that they went ahead with a mistake. They have incurred a liability. The ratepayers of this province are going to pay for it. What is this bungle going to cost us?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The NDP clearly don't think anything is needed when it comes to power. They don't support nuclear. They clearly no longer support renewable energy. Although I know the critic supports it, it's his leader who stands up day after day and opposes it. They don't support our investments in conservation. They don't support the efforts we're making to rebuild the energy generation in this province.

We're building a stronger, more reliable and cleaner system of energy. There was a time when the NDP may have supported that, but they apparently have lost their principles. Instead of being in favour of cleaner air and a brighter future for our kids and grandkids, they're standing clearly in the way of that. Man, they've moved a long way from their previous positions.

The leader and the critic—I can see that wedge growing wider and wider every time each one of them stands up in this House and takes an opposite tack on where we should be going with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Climate change is something every government must deal with. Ontario is a world leader. The McGuinty government has made great progress by shutting down dirty coal-fired plants, investing in transit and protecting green space.

Green energy is becoming a larger and larger share of our energy mix, and while my constituents know that harnessing the power of the wind is a key renewable, they are also concerned by misinformation and half-truths being spread about the approval process.

Ontarians want to know if it's true that once an energy company announces a new project, the public has no say?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question, because nothing could be further from the truth. Our renewable energy approvals process at our ministry mandates a transparent, open and predictable process for people, municipalities and proponents.

I know that some municipalities have concerns about proposed projects, and I want to be very clear: My ministry views municipal consultation as essential to this entire process. That's why it's built right into the process. That's why it is the law under the Green Energy Act.

Any company that wants to build a wind project must sit down with the municipality to hear any legitimate concerns. They must hold public meetings and they must

attempt to address any outstanding issues in order for them to have a complete application. If they don't put a complete application in front of my ministry, they will not receive an approval, and if they don't receive an approval from my ministry, it cannot be built.

When it comes down to this, we have final say, but we will say no unless the public and municipalities are given their say. That's the law.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I know my constituents and Ontarians will be pleased to hear you correct that misconception. I'm also glad to hear you confirm there are clear setbacks and a clear process for municipal consultation, but, Minister, I am also hearing concerns that you are changing the process. Are you giving more power to companies or taking away the power of landowners to make decisions about their property? Are you making changes to the way the process works?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to be very clear. We are currently consulting with the public by getting feedback through the environmental registry on some amendments to the regulations that would clarify our intentions and our rules. We are the first in North America to have this process.

These rules were put in place to protect human health. We established a tough setback of at least 550 metres from what is known as a receptor. So we're not changing policy direction and we're not changing the way the approvals process works. We based our rules around the distance to a receptor, which means—and I want to be clear—a place where people live, sleep or go to school. The amendments make it clear that we do not consider a tool shed or a hunting cabin a receptor. It is where people live, sleep and go to school. That's why we're proposing even greater clarity through these amendments.

I know what Ontarians want. They want clean air to breathe. Science is clear that dirty coal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's just a very straightforward question. When will your long-term energy plan be going before cabinet for approval?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Whenever a member gets up and says, "This is a very straightforward question," you can rest assured that it really is never that way.

I'm looking very, very forward to moving forward with our long-term energy plan. As I said to this Legislature and as I said outside of this Legislature, this long-term energy plan will be out before the end of the year. We're hoping it'll be sooner rather than later.

We've been working very, very hard. We've been talking to Ontarians. We've been talking to industry. We've been talking to the environmentalists. We've been talking to people right across this province, because Ontario needs the certainty that our long-term energy plan is going to provide.

Seven years ago, we didn't have that. Seven years ago, there was no such thing as energy planning in this province. Seven years ago, energy planning consisted of day-to-day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Halton and Simcoe North.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I heard a lot of words; I didn't get an answer there.

I have another very straightforward question for the minister. He did so well on the first one, you know? How much more do you plan to spend on advertising to promote Premier McGuinty and George Smitherman's Green Energy Act?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Why didn't it tie into your first question?

Mr. John Yakabuski: We asked them about the plan. How much they're going to spend on advertising the plan as it moves forward would be very pertinent as part of the supplementary.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can tell you one thing: I know why the Conservatives would not want the public to know a lot about what's going on with green energy in this province. They would not want the public to know that they stand steadfast against the 50,000 clean energy jobs we're creating. They don't want the people of Ontario to know that. They don't want the people of Ontario to know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Take this as a warning, to the member for Simcoe North.

Please continue, Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member asks where they are. I know that some of the members know because they join us when we cut the ribbons. I remember when I was in Sarnia-Lambton not long ago. The member from Sarnia joined me. In fact, I've got a picture. I'm not going to show it because that would be a prop, but I'll certainly send it over to the leader of the third party. While we're working hard to create jobs in this province and their leader gets up steadfastly opposing it, his members are spreading out all over this province celebrating the jobs that we're creating in those very communities that many of his members represent.

These are important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I appreciate the efforts of the armchair Speaker from Renfrew.

New question.

VETERANS' LICENCE PLATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. We will mark Remembrance Day a week from today. One way that Ontario remembers and honours our veterans each and every year is through the

issuance of poppy-adorned licence plates. But the Ontario government does not make poppy plates for motorcycles. In British Columbia, they've been able to do that; they've been available since 2004. In Quebec, they've been available since about last year.

My question is: Will the McGuinty government make the motorcycle poppy plates available here in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the timely question. I have heard about this issue from other people in the province. I want to put this in context, because we're the government that introduced the poppy licence plates in Ontario; we're the government that designated the Highway of Heroes. I think it's pretty clear that we understand it's important that we honour our veterans.

I want to say to the member opposite that I am working with the Minister of Government Services. We think this is a good idea and we would like to move forward with it. We've asked both of our staffs to come forward and tell us not whether we do it but how we do it. We're going to be working with them and hope to announce soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The follow-up to the question is in the words of Ken Blanchard, a veteran and sergeant-at-arms for the Royal Canadian Legion, branch 4, in Welland, who is one of many veterans asking this government to act soon to make the poppy plates available for motorcycles. He says, "There have been lots of lives lost and we don't want people forgetting why they're doing what they're doing."

I thank the minister for her initial response. Will the minister now tell Mr. Blanchard and other veterans how soon they will be able to have access to poppy plates for their motorcycles?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I made it clear that we will move as quickly as we can. There is a series of approvals that we have to go through, but I think we agree that it's an important thing to do.

I can't promise that we'll be able to do this for this November 11, but it would be my sincere hope that before next November 11 these licence plates would be available.

1130

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Labour. My constituents and local businesses have asked me about recent changes to the WSIB. They know that the WSIB has a plan to reduce their unfunded liability, which is similar to six other jurisdictions in Canada. But can you tell the House how this will improve services for employers and workers? Workers, their families and businesses need to know that they will be protected.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member. The member is quite right that the WSIB does have a prudent plan to retire the unfunded liability. This is about protecting workers, making sure that we're building and bring-

ing security and sustainability to their insurance system. This is something that no other government has done in the past.

We appointed David Marshall, a former Auditor General, as the new president and CEO of the WSIB this past January. Mr. Marshall has been working on a plan to ensure that the WSIB is on a firm financial footing. Also, there is a funding review with stakeholders and a consultation that's being led by Professor Harry Arthurs. This consultation is meeting with labour groups and employers; and I know that leaders of both opposition parties have been contacted through a letter to participate in this consultation. These consultations will be valuable toward the full funding of the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: The WSIB has served our workers and employers and employees for over 100 years, and the extent of their unfunded liability has been severely impacted by the recent economic downturn. The WSIB requires long-term sustainability. Can you elaborate on the funding review and what this government is going to do to ensure that employers and workers are covered by a secure and stable insurance system?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member. The funding review, as the member mentioned, is going to allow the stakeholders to assist the WSIB in putting together this strategic plan to address its financial sustainability. We've asked Professor Arthurs specifically to engage on what should be replaced. One thing is that the model is the Friedland formula; it's called the F-word by injured workers. It was brought in by the NDP; it became more regressive under the Conservatives. This government needs to get rid of that. The government is also intending to introduce legislation to support the outcomes of the funding review and further strengthen the independence of the WSIB as an arm's-length agency.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy, and it's very straightforward. Is the minister refusing to make the Samsung deal public because he does not want Ontarians to know its price?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Under freedom of information, that contract has already been released to other parties, so it has indeed been made public.

But let me talk a little bit about what the Samsung agreement achieves. It is a huge, \$7-billion investment, creating 7,000 jobs. Ironically, it wasn't long ago that I was out in the Haldimand-Norfolk area, where we were all celebrating together with Six Nations and the community at large the creation of a green energy hub. And guess who joined us in celebrating these 12,000 jobs that the Samsung agreement is going to bring? The member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I won't show it but I do have with me here—I'd ask you to pass it over—a newspaper picture of all of us together, arm in arm, celebrating what our Green Energy Act is doing in the Haldimand-Norfolk area. We're creating jobs and we're proud of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The McGuinty Liberals have alleged that the Samsung deal will create 16,000 jobs and that the Green Energy Act will create 50,000 jobs. Despite the big talk, you have little more than announcements; and your track record on creating these jobs has been, to say the least, underwhelming. Are you refusing to back up your claims because so few jobs were actually created in the year and a half since the Green Energy Act came into force?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I invite the member to come out with me to Windsor and talk to the 600 families who are getting jobs out in Windsor. I invite the member to join me in Guelph, where 800 jobs are being created. I ask the member to join me in Kingston, where 1,200 jobs are being created. How about Oakville, 200 jobs; how about Welland, 1,000 jobs; how about London, 300 jobs? Or why don't we all go together to Simcoe, Lanark, Middlesex, Oxford and the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, 2,500 jobs?

We are creating jobs right across this province, in ridings that they represent, in ridings that we represent, in ridings that the third party represents. We're building a strong, clean energy economy here in Ontario. We're leading the world when it comes to attracting investment, we're leading the world when it comes to creating jobs and we're leading the world when it comes to cleaning our environment and cleaning the air that we and our children have to breathe, something all Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, in northern Ontario, the MNR is setting aside vast areas of crown land for tourist outfitters. The greater issue is the limited access traditional users have to our natural resources. Cottagers, anglers and hunters are all being kept off public land so that a sense of remoteness can be maintained for tourist outfitters.

The Public Lands Act, section 3, under the shoreline reservations for recreation and access section, outlines that 25% or more of crown land that borders a lake must be reserved for public use, yet this statute is frequently violated by the MNR.

My question to you is, what right do you have to violate the law and to restrict the access of traditional users to those lands?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to answer the question. Our government certainly recognizes the contribution the resource-based tourism sector provides to the economic prosperity of Ontario. We have been working with Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario. We have a long history and partnership of working together to sustainably manage our fish and our wildlife resources. Our government is committed to improving the business climate and encouraging investments in those remote tourism areas in northern Ontario.

We understand the economic challenges that they face, and it's certainly something that they've communicated to me. We work with our northern outfitters. We want to make sure that they have the resources, and we want to brag about what we do in northern Ontario. It's a wonderful place to visit. We will work with them, and I'm pleased to make sure that we communicate on a regular basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I had a really smart supplementary written out, but I'm saying there lies the problem: The minister doesn't understand that you need to strike a balance between, yes, the need of the outfitter to make a living, but also people having traditional access to those lakes and areas that they've had for generations within their families in northern Ontario.

People are fed up. They're not able to access lakes that their fathers and their forefathers have hunted and fished and camped and picked blueberries at for years and years. The minister stands up, doesn't answer the question and says, "I'm working with outfitters." Great, but what about all of the citizens in northern Ontario? What are you prepared to do for them?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As I said, we've been working with Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario as well as many other stakeholders. They came to meet me very early on, when I became minister in January. They have reflected to me what kinds of constraints they had on their business and how we could work together. In fact, in Rainy River, we gave \$150,000 to help winterize the Harris Hill Resort. We offer year-round tourist opportunities.

We're extraordinarily proud of the relationship we have with a lot of our outfitters in northern Ontario, something we strive to improve. We can always do better, and it is about finding a balance. It's about protecting the north and providing business and economic development.

We will continue to work with them. We appreciate the participation that they give us, and we appreciate the business that they provide in northern Ontario. It's something we want to strive to improve and grow, and I'm pleased to work with them in the future.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. This week, Ontario's Jewish community is reaching out to their local communities during Holocaust Education Week. It is an opportunity for Jews to tell their story and to remember those who perished and those who survived.

In the Willowdale Jewish community, there are many survivors and descendants of this terrible tragedy of the Holocaust. In Ontario, we live in a society where diversity does not divide us, but unites us. In Ontario, we work to promote these values and fight intolerance.

Minister, what is our government doing to combat intolerance and hatred on an ongoing basis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Willowdale for this question.

First of all, I commend the Jewish community for hosting their 30th annual Holocaust Education Week. The Holocaust represents to all of us a dark chapter in the history of humanity, a chapter that we must ensure is never, ever repeated.

This past spring, I was in Israel with Premier McGuinty and the members from Willowdale, Eglinton-Lawrence and York Centre, where we toured Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial that bears witness to the holocaust. We must never allow hatred and intolerance to flourish in our province. It is completely unacceptable. As Ontarians, we must always stand up against all forms of bigotry.

The McGuinty government is committed to creating an Ontario where all Ontarians, newcomers and members of our diverse communities feel welcomed and respected.

Mr. David Zimmer: Intolerance and hatred do not have any place in Ontario. As Remembrance Day approaches, we reflect on the rights and freedoms that our brave soldiers fought and died for: the right of freedom of religion, the right of freedom of expression.

Tragedies like the Holocaust and World War II have touched the lives of many Ontarians. It's important that the lessons of the past are not lost on the current and future generations. My constituents want to know what our government is doing to help ensure that our young people grow up to be informed citizens, citizens who honour our history and embrace our multicultural values.

Minister, in particular, what is our government doing to educate our youth about intolerance?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I appreciate the question from the member for Willowdale.

It's our duty to impart to our youth stories of our past that have shaped the society in which we all live today. That is why, in grade 10 in our schools, our youth learn about World War II, about the Holocaust and the impact that these events had and have on Canada and the world. They also learn about human rights, about genocide and war crimes and about the values of democracy, citizenship and civic participation. We are fortunate that Ontario is one of the few places in the world where children from all backgrounds, all ethnicities and all religions come together, learn together and grow together in a tolerant and inclusive society.

Our government will continue to support education and awareness initiatives that teach our youth about our past so that they can grow up to be outstanding citizens of strong character.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to correct a statement I made in the Legislature on November 3. In responding to the member from Ottawa-Orléans about the total number of trees planted to date by Trees Ontario, I stated that approximately 6,000 trees have been planted. What I meant to

say is that approximately six million trees have been planted to date.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Charles Sousa: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: On behalf of my colleagues, especially those of us in the rump, I would like to acknowledge that the member for Oak Ridges-Markham, Dr. Helena Jaczek, celebrates her birthday tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a point of order, but happy birthday.

DEFERRED VOTES

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Moridi, Reza
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bartolucci, Rick	Gélinas, France	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	
Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Yakubski, John
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 55; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would ask that this be referred to the standing committee on good government—on general government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms. Smith moved on November 3 as government notice of motion number 32, providing for allocation of time on Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1151 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Murray, Glen R.
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Pendergast, Leeanna
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoskins, Eric	Ramsay, David
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Rinaldi, Lou
Best, Margaret	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	
Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Quellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Kormos, Peter	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Marchese, Rosario	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 49; the nays are 24.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed?

Interjections: No.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Elliott, Christine	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Hudak, Tim	Qaadri, Shafiq
Best, Margaret	Jaczek, Helena	Ramsay, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jeffrey, Linda	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Chiarelli, Bob	Kular, Kuldip	Smith, Monique
Chudleigh, Ted	Kwinter, Monte	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	MacLeod, Lisa	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	Mangat, Amrit	Wilkinson, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Zimmer, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 74; the nays are zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2010, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to ask all members to join me as we take this opportunity to thank this great group of pages. We wish each one of them all the best in their future endeavours. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm sure there are many on the opposition side who would love to vote for unanimous consent for the House to meet next week.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The president of the Canadian Polish Congress is on the way up to the chamber. I'd like to inform the House that the military parade is ending at city hall on Sunday at 1 o'clock. Consequently, the colours of the Polish nation are being raised there and not at Queen's Park.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Dr. Fatemeh Eftekhari of Richmond Hill, who's visiting the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOSEPH SIMONATO

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to recognize the late Joseph (Chic) Simonato, a genuine gentleman and an incredible man whom I had the honour of knowing.

A veteran in his own right, fighting for our country in the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day in World War II, Chic believed strongly in the remembrance of our local veterans and worked tirelessly to preserve a historical record so no veteran would be forgotten.

He published two large volumes documenting the history of our local veterans' service in the Canadian Armed Forces over the past 150 years, as well as a historical book on the Collingwood Shipyards, where he worked since the late 1940s before retiring. As a mutual friend, Pat Miscampbell, put it best, he was "quite likely very annoyed to have died as he most likely still had at least one more book in him."

Chic was the catalyst in the development of many initiatives and projects in and around the Collingwood area: the Veterans' Wall of Honour, the restoration of the Collingwood Cenotaph and the development of the new lawn bowling facility. He was involved in his church and was a lifelong member of the Canadian Legion, serving at one point as its president. He was a board member of the Collingwood Museum and a recipient of both the Order of Collingwood and a Companion of the Order of Collingwood.

In 2010, he was recognized by the Minister of Veterans Affairs with a commendation award given only once a year to someone who provided exemplary service to their community and the remembrance of their fellow veterans.

Chic was an unbelievable individual, and he is very much missed. I send my deepest sympathies and condolences to his wife, Mary Lou, and to his wonderful family.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Kormos: Anna King of Thorold is a victim, not of her infirmity, which requires her to use a motorized wheelchair, but she's a victim of the McGuinty government and its failure to respond to people with needs in this province like Ms. King—in Ms. King's instance, her need for a motorized wheelchair to be provided under the assistive devices program.

It took five months for approval to be obtained from the ADP, and during that five months, she was a victim and a prisoner in her own home. I've learned from one of the larger local providers of mobility devices, Niagara Mobility Home Health Care, who has \$650,000 worth of applications outstanding and has already put \$250,000 worth of equipment into people's homes, that they haven't been paid for, and they, I should tell you, are at risk of bankruptcy because of these huge backlogs and delays in payment for mobility devices that they've already provided.

I've learned that this is not unique to Niagara Mobility, nor is it unique to the Niagara region; it's prevalent across the province. The ADP, the assistive devices program, already the subject matter of a scathing indictment by the Auditor General, has failed to get its act together and is a mess, coming second only to the Family Responsibility Office here in the province of Ontario in terms of issues being raised by constituents. It's time for this minister and this government to step up to the plate and fix ADP once and for all.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: In Ontario, our government has made important and necessary investments in hydro that will ensure that Ontarians will continue to have the dependable power they've come to rely on. Previous to these investments, brownouts and blackouts were common in our province. The previous government let electricity supply diminish while demand soared. Our government understands that important investments in 5,000 kilometres of new transmission lines and 2,500 megawatts of new renewable wind and solar generation will keep the lights on in a sustainable way.

These investments give Ontarians the energy security they didn't have under previous governments. However, these important investments also come with a cost. We recognize that on this side of the House, and that's why we've created tax credits for low-income families and seniors.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit would allow 740,000 seniors to receive up to \$1,025 per year while Ontario families will receive up to \$900. In total, 2.8 million Ontarians will be entitled to receive, on average, \$455 a year. For northern families, we've put in place the northern Ontario energy credit, worth up to \$200, to help with higher energy costs in the north. Over 50% of all northerners will benefit from this assistance.

The opposition has opposed these investments. They refused to make the investments necessary to ensure the

security and dependability of Ontario's energy system. Time and again—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

BOB REID

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today to pay tribute to Bob Reid, brother of my constituent Gary Reid, who passed away on October 12.

Bob Reid had a varied career. He worked in the Alberta oil industry with Page-Hersey Tubes; the publishing industry at Maclean-Hunter; and established his own advertising agency, Reidcorp.

Bob Reid served as head of staff for Bob Nixon when he first became Leader of the Opposition in the 1970s. Here is what Bob Nixon had to say about Bob Reid as his chief of staff:

"He was much respected and successful in organization and motivation.... Although we were somewhat disappointed in our efforts to gain the confidence of the Ontario electorate, we offered a sensible political alternative, developed a good organization and had some fun along the way. Bob had many ideas for strengthening our efforts and worked hard in the cause of Liberalism and community service."

I spoke yesterday with Gerry Phillips. He remembers Bob Reid well and shared many amusing stories of Bob's involvement in Scarborough politics.

I am pleased to recognize Bob Reid for his services to the community and to good governance in Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: This week, Premier Dalton McGuinty is in China strengthening economic ties and promoting Ontario as a strong and competitive global financial centre. The Premier's week-long mission is allowing him to meet with key Canadian and Chinese business leaders, potential investors, government officials and Canadian partners.

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The Premier spent several days discussing the many benefits of the province's Open Ontario plan, while also highlighting Ontario tourism and the province's clean technology and green energy expertise. He travelled to Nanjing, where he celebrated 25 years of good relations between Ontario and Jiangsu province and signed additional agreements that will help move Ontario forward. Premier McGuinty and Governor Luo signed another five-year friendship agreement that will ensure economic opportunities such as international education, energy conservation, clean water technology, financial services and tourism.

While visiting Hong Kong, the Premier also highlighted Ontario's colleges and universities as a prime destination for Chinese students and announced the launch of a new Ontario Trillium scholarship for international Ph.D. students.

The McGuinty government understands that Ontario families want good jobs and opportunities for their

children. One of the best ways to do this is to build on the progress that we've made and continue to establish strong, lasting relationships with countries—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I was honoured to join with other members of this assembly, and yourself as well, for the 35th anniversary of the Office of the Ombudsman here in Ontario.

The Office of the Ombudsman was established, as Arthur Maloney put it, to allow average citizens access to the corridors of power. Sometimes people who are supposedly protected by government find that government itself is the problem, and that's why the Office of the Ombudsman was established. In fact, the first Ombudsman, Arthur Maloney, I'm honoured to say, came from my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—it was then Renfrew South—from the village of Eganville. I remember how proud my father was in 1975 when Mr. Maloney was appointed to that office. He left a very successful law career to take the job.

Since that time, we've been served by Donald Morand, Daniel Hill, Roberta Jamieson, Clare Lewis, and our Ombudsman today, André Marin.

It is important in the days today, when the government has gotten bigger and bigger, to have an office established to assist average citizens to have somewhere to go to when they are unhappy or dissatisfied with the response of that government. We are thankful we have the Ombudsman. Congratulations on 35 years.

VETERANS

Mr. Dave Levac: As Remembrance Day approaches, people across Ontario will take time to remember the sacrifices made by those who fought for our country for justice and freedom during the many conflicts throughout history. We also remember those serving and those who have sacrificed their lives during the current mission in Afghanistan, including Captain Steve Leary and Trooper Larry Rudd of Brantford, who gave their lives while serving their country, their province and their community.

We signal our gratitude and respect to our veterans and troops in many ways. In the riding of Brant, I have had the honour of chairing the Thank-A-Vet Luncheon—I've been involved for over 15 years—which takes place this Saturday, November 6. This luncheon is a small token of appreciation we hold to thank the veterans from Brantford, Brant, Six Nations and New Credit. It is the largest event of its kind in Canada and sees attendance of over 700 veterans, spouses and widows who come for a complimentary lunch and an opportunity to share memories.

The event continues to be a huge success every year due to the many volunteers who give their time and energy, and especially our sponsors, who provide the

funds needed to put this event on. We thank them all. A special thank you to the Thank-A-Vet committee co-chairs Heather Gaukel and Grant Philpott, and members Tracy Vanderwyk; Liz Ferracioli; Scott and Dianna Clare; Derek Pite, a veteran himself; Pat Eyzenga; Ross and Chris Enslev; Matt Bradley; Mike Rafferty; Bill Chopp; Paul Elliott; Don Spiece; Debbie Smith; Tina Draycott; Chris Chaban; and Ed Chrzanowski.

We will remember them.

STEM CELL AND MARROW DONATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I was pleased to stand in the Legislature this morning to welcome Mike and Kim Smyth to the Ontario Legislature. Their son David passed away this summer while he was waiting to find a bone marrow donor. It was David's wish to publicize the need for bone marrow donors within Ontario and throughout Canada.

Right now, there are over 800 Canadian patients who are in desperate need of a stem cell transplant to treat potentially life-threatening illnesses. Currently, there are more than a quarter of a million Canadians who are registered on the Canadian Blood Services' OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network. OneMatch is a program dedicated to recruiting healthy, committed volunteer donors for patients in need of stem cell transplants, but they need more, and we can do more.

A few minutes ago, it was my pleasure to announce the MPP challenge in honour of David Smyth. I'm asking each and every member of the Legislature from all parties to host a clinic like the one that is taking place right now in room 163 in their own riding and to encourage their constituents to get registered with the OneMatch program. I'm also urging all those at Queen's Park today between the ages of 17 and 50, who may be viewing this on TV, to go down right now to room 163 and register as a donor and perhaps save a life like David's.

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On November 11, we will pay tribute to those brave men and women who gave their lives in the defence of our own country. For Canadians of Polish heritage, that day has added significance since November 11 is Polish Independence Day. After the occupation forces were expelled from Poland in 1918, a free, reunited and independent Poland was established on November 11.

For Polish Canadians, November 11 means freedom from the yoke of oppression. We're reminded by the anniversary of Polish Independence Day that the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and that true peace must be built on the principles of freedom and democracy for all peoples and for all nations.

The Polish Canadian Congress and many friends, Canadians and Poles alike, will raise the colours of a free and democratic Poland this Sunday at about 1 o'clock

after a military parade from the St. Stanislaw church. Of course, all of us are invited.

Finally, let me simply say this: Today we take great pride in the accomplishments of Polish Canadians here in Canada, and we wish them well as they celebrate Polish Independence Day.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on Ontario's electronic health records initiative from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This report emanates out of a report by the Auditor General which was tabled in the Legislature in October 2009. The committee had hearings on October 21, October 28 and November 4, 2009, and now the committee is presenting its report.

I want to read five or six of the recommendations. The committee's recommendations are directed at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care or eHealth Ontario. They are to report back to the committee on the following:

(1) the progress made to address operational and procurement problems through improved oversight and governance;

(2) the status of the electronic health records strategic plan with attention to the technological infrastructure and the development of clinical applications to meet the needs of health care providers and clients;

(3) the implementation of the enhanced accountability initiatives; for example, the balance scorecard framework;

(4) quarterly public reports on the implementation of the EHR initiative;

(5) the possibility of the office of the Corporate Chief Information and Information Technology Officer extending its IT expertise and services to eHealth Ontario and other entities.

And lastly, although there are other recommendations as well, the committee wants a report on the progress in ensuring that consultant proposals set out clear deliverables, milestones, expected time frames and associated costs for each contract.

The committee put a lot of time and effort into the eHealth file. It was a complicated issue. I want to congratulate each member of the committee as well as the Auditor General for the work and effort they've put into this report.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate, and move so.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling has moved to adjourn the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RESPECT FOR ONTARIO VETERANS, SOLDIERS AND WAR DEAD ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE RESPECT DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS, DES SOLDATS ET DES MORTS PAR FAIT DE GUERRE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. MacLeod moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to the observance of Remembrance Day / Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'observation du jour du Souvenir.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm humbled to put forward the Respect for Ontario Veterans, Soldiers and War Dead Act. This bill, if passed, would legislate Remembrance Day as a statutory holiday, as it is in most other Canadian provinces and territories. It would also amend the Retail Sales Act so that Ontario businesses would be closed to respect Remembrance Day, and it would reallocate Family Day as a statutory holiday as well.

Finally, it would amend the Education Act to ensure that Ontario schools would hold a remembrance service on the last school day before Remembrance Day. I'm humbled that this idea has the support of retired Major Generals Lewis MacKenzie and Clive Addy, who's a former vice-president of the Royal Canadian Legion, as well as Michelle Vessey of the Military Moms Network and Colonel Clive Addy of the Conference of Defence Associations and Doug Munroe, the zone commander of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Mr. Speaker, I actually made an error. The Conference of Defence Associations is actually run by Alain Pellerin.

HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CREDIT SCORING BAN ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 INTERDISANT LE RECOURS AU POINTAGE DE CRÉDIT POUR L'ASSURANCE PROPRIÉTAIRE OCCUPANT

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to ban the use of credit history and ratings in respect of homeowners and other personal property insurance / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances en vue d'interdire le recours aux antécédents en matière de crédit et aux cotes de solvabilité relativement à l'assurance propriétaire occupant et à d'autres types d'assurance de biens meubles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: The bill, if passed, prohibits insurers from using, in respect of personal property insurance, a person's credit history or ratings as grounds for the following: (1) declining to issue, terminating or refusing to renew a contract or refusing to provide or continue any coverage or endorsement in respect of a contract; and (2) classifying risks and the determination of rates for coverage or a category of insurance.

I would like to thank Bryan Yetman, the president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, and Randy Carroll, the CEO of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, for their leadership and their crusade in fighting for fairness for the people of Ontario, who want fair and reasonable insurance for their homes.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on Remembrance Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. David Zimmer: November 11 is Remembrance Day, and traditionally there are many tributes offered throughout the province and in this chamber where we recognize our veterans for the work that they've done and the sacrifices they've made. We talk about defending democracy, defending freedom, and defending country, and those are noble ideals. But on another level, sometimes I think perhaps we forget to ask ourselves the visceral question, the very personal question: What did their sacrifice mean in terms of the individuals themselves, in terms of their families, in terms of their friends?

I think there's an obligation on us to try to understand their sacrifice in these very personal ways and what it meant to them in their hearts, their minds and their souls; to feel for them, to grieve for them on a personal level, for the death of a soldier, the death of a pilot, the death of a sailor. I think we have an obligation to try to feel the pain and grief of their mothers and their fathers and their brothers and their sisters. When we reflect on that at some level, it's impossible to comprehend—in the safety of our homes, in the safety of our careers, in the safety of this chamber—exactly what that meant. How are we to understand what it must have felt like to be shot at, to be bombed, to suffer grievous wounds, to die from grievous wounds or to live with grievous wounds: blindness,

limbless, and other forms of maiming? But this is the visceral reality of what it was like to serve in the armed forces in defence of those noble virtues: democracy and freedom.

All of their names are chiselled on the various cenotaphs throughout the province of Ontario: in small-town Ontario, villages, big cities, on the high school remembrance plaques, all over Ontario. But how many of us, passing a cenotaph, passing one of those high school plaques, take a moment to pause and just look at those names and ask ourselves, "What did it mean to them and to their families on a personal level?" I think that our obligation—I know that our obligation—on this day of remembrance is to try to feel that reality, to feel that danger, to feel that fear, to feel that horror that they felt, to feel the horror and the fear and the anxiety that their families at home felt, with their sons and daughters off facing grave danger.

It's a visceral reality: World War I, 66,000 Canadians killed; World War II, 42,000 Canadians killed; Korea, 516; and today in Afghanistan, 153. Each one of those individuals faced horror, fear, danger, and then all of those emotions must have been on their parents' minds and their brothers' and sisters' minds. Imagine today in Afghanistan the fear of the individual, the fear of the parent for their loved one who's over there, and every step they take might be their last because they might step on a land mine and blow up. Our obligation is to understand the magnitude of their risk and sacrifices and to respect them for that.

Let me tell you one story to drive the point home. Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg was invited by the Canadian government to the national Vimy unveiling in the late 1920s, and there's a picture of her in the magazine journal article that covered it. She's standing there quietly, saluting in a very frail, dignified but brave manner. And this is what the caption says under the photograph: "Among the Canadian pilgrims who attended the unveiling of the Vimy Memorial was Silver Cross Mother Mrs. C.S. Woods of Winnipeg, who lost eight sons in the war. She wore all their medals" on the Vimy unveiling day.

Just let that thought sink in: a mother, a father and a family—eight sons. I did a little bit of research on the background. Mrs. Wood had 12 children, 11 sons, all of whom enlisted. Two were underage and snuck in.

Need I say more? I think we have an obligation to ask ourselves: How do we comprehend that sacrifice? How do we honour it? How do we remember it? That's our challenge. That's our responsibility on Remembrance Day.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Next week, we will be observing Remembrance Day and Veterans' Week. The theme of Veterans' Week this year is: How will you remember?

As Canadians, we no longer have first-hand memories of World War I since John Babcock, the last Canadian soldier, died earlier this year. In fact, there are only four veterans of the First World War alive anywhere. Each passing year, there are fewer and fewer veterans of the

Second World War and the Korean War. So I ask: How will you remember?

As we sit in this House, we can remember Lieutenant Charles Smith Rutherford. On August 26, 1918, at Monchy, France, Lieutenant Rutherford took 80 enemy soldiers captive and was awarded the Victoria Cross, Canada's highest military medal of honour. The lieutenant was later the postmaster of Colborne, Ontario, before once again donning his uniform during World War II. In between, Lieutenant Rutherford was the Sergeant-at-Arms here at Queen's Park, performing his duties in this very chamber.

We can remember by recognizing the heroism of Victoria Cross recipient and Toronto native Frederick Albert Tilston, who was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery during World War II. Later, he returned to Toronto and joined the War Amps association in 1945.

When you take the short ferry trip across to Toronto Island Airport, you will see a monument to David Ernest Hornell, the Mimico, Ontario-born flight lieutenant who was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for saving his crew and, as a result, giving up his own life on June 24, 1944.

Those are stories and names that every Canadian should know. But do they? Medals awarded for valour aside, there are hundreds of thousands more soldiers and veterans who have served our country that we should remember.

So it is important that this Remembrance Day and all through Veterans' Week, and in fact at all times, we take the time to listen to the words of these veterans; read and hear their stories so we can understand why one in 10 Canadians who served in World War I gave up his life for the cause of freedom and democracy. They will help us see and understand that the nearly 100,000 Canadians killed or wounded during World War II did so to fight tyranny.

These stories will honour those Canadians killed fighting to keep the world safe in the Korean War. They will honour those on United Nations peacekeeping missions and those killed in the war in Afghanistan. There will be stories of how Canada stood up and fought and became a nation at Vimy Ridge, and how we fought as that nation on Juno Beach; how Canadian soldiers helped liberate the Netherlands during World War II, and today are helping to liberate Afghanistan from the Taliban; how Canadian peacekeepers stood between warring factions in Cyprus from 1959 until the mid-1990s, and how they continue to stand on guard for us today.

But it's not enough only to remember what Canadian soldiers did in battle or peacekeeping roles. It is also important to know that they lived lives after, raised families and, like my father, served their country in other ways. Like my father, many served in this Legislature. Many came home to be schoolteachers, doctors, lawyers, members of the clergy; in fact, there is nary a profession that veterans did not serve to populate on their return.

When we stand in silence next Thursday, we do so to remember those who have fallen in defence of liberty and against tyranny on behalf of our province and our

country. We will remember their sacrifice because it is that sacrifice that has made the freedom and prosperity we enjoy today possible.

I encourage everyone across this great province to join Royal Canadian Legion members at a commemorative ceremony in their community at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. I urge them all to take advantage of this opportunity to show our respect and admiration to those we can never repay.

On behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the Ontario PC caucus, I say thank you to the men and women in uniform and their families for continuing to serve our province and our country. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm proud to address Remembrance Day here in the chamber on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats.

Members of this House, of this chamber know that Ontarians wear poppies during Veterans' Week to commemorate the armistice that ended the Great War at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918.

Most everywhere you go in this city and in the town squares of our home ridings, you come across the stone monuments, the crosses of sacrifice and the bronze plaques filled with names of young Canadians, many who died a long time ago when the world was a very different place and Europe was still a very faraway place. The casualty lists are meant to help us remember, but sheer numbers have a tendency to numb the mind.

We can put those losses in practical terms. Winning the battle of Vimy Ridge—Vimy Ridge alone—would be like losing the population of many Ontario towns, the whole population. This year, John Babcock died. He was 109 years old. He was Canada's last living link to the Great War, and that means that now we have to work all that much harder not to forget.

It's a little easier to put a face to those who died on the beaches of Dieppe and Normandy, in the streets of Holland, in the skies over Germany and beneath the cold, cold waters of the North Atlantic. I was at the Canadian Corps in Port Colborne just a couple of weeks ago. One of its members, a constituent, had come to the corps with a love letter written by her father when he was but 22, sent to her mother in Port Colborne. You see, she'd never met her father. She was but newly born. Her mother saved the love letter. Her father, 22, from small-town Port Colborne, wrote it on the ship that was transporting him across the channel to Normandy. He acknowledged that his knees were shaking—I read this; I held this in my own hand; it was a very moving thing—but he was confident that they'd put the Germans on the run. Well, they did, but her dad never came home.

How a young man in the midst of this incredible moment would take the time to write to his dear young wife and daughter, never seen, acknowledge that his knees were shaking and, oh, yes, profess the most genuine and passionate love for his wife is just an amazing testament to the incredible courage of service people, be it then or be it now.

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The Second World War—we've seen the newsreels and the documentaries. As I say, we still have a connection to these living veterans. Some of those survivors are family members. Some of our friends fought in Korea too, and in Vietnam. Many served with great sacrifice—incredible sacrifice—in the Merchant Marine. We see these folks aging. We see them at the grocery store, at the post office and at the Legion.

Strangely and sadly enough, we seem to get worse at remembering the closer we get to the present, notwithstanding present sacrifices. We see the Balkans as a newspaper headline, or the First Gulf War as a mere flicker on television, and Afghanistan now as a grim statistic flashing across a computer screen. Maybe it just cuts too close. There's many a member of this assembly who has borne witness to the loss of families in their communities, the communities they represent, and who has attended the funerals of those service people who made their sacrifice on behalf of Canada and in the service of humankind.

Maybe it cuts too close. Maybe it feels too immediate. Sometimes, you see, we associate Remembrance Day with the past. After all, it is Remembrance Day. But we'd do well to put it in the present.

We walk past the Ontario veterans' memorial on our way into work here at Queen's Park. Maybe in November, this month, we might walk a little slower and linger over the pictures from the long line of conflicts and wars dating back to the Fenian raids. Maybe we could let the monument take us back to a time before the age of CF-18s to the era of Billy Bishop's biplane. Maybe, when we see a young woman or man walking across those grounds right here in front of Queen's Park, we might remind ourselves that they might have just gotten back from a tour of duty in Afghanistan or have lost a loved one in that country.

Remembering doesn't need to be political; in fact, it shouldn't be. That's a very odd thing to say here in the chamber, but I'm confident that we all believe that is very true. Wearing the poppy doesn't mean we choose to glorify war and violence—far from it. It's not a party badge for any one political stripe. It's simpler than that, it really is. It's much more subtle. We can choose, and we should, to remember individual lives. We can choose, and again we should, to value individual sacrifice whether or not we agree with the foreign policy. Old men start wars; young women and men fight them.

We can choose to remember because even if we didn't require them to do so, many paid dearly for our advantages and for that protection of humankind. We can choose to remember and keep our convictions at the same time. We can choose to recite In Flanders Fields and Dulce et Decorum Est and mean both just as sincerely. Remembrance Day isn't partisan. It doesn't matter how we voted on any single issue. It's not the sole turf of the right or the centre or the left. It's for all Ontarians to remember in our own way, but to remember together. Quiet patriotism is no better or worse than waving the

flag. What is important is that we never forget. We must never, ever forget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to thank the honourable members for their comments today. I would ask all members and those who are here in the chamber today to rise as we observe two minutes of silence and observe those two minutes in remembrance of those men and women who made the very sacrifices that give each of us here as elected officials the right to sit in this chamber today.

The House observed two minutes' silence.

PETITIONS

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it read as follows:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks with page Haadiyah.

CEMETERIES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I've signed my name and send this to the Clerk via page Marie-Josée.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

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"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and community safety minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and I will forward it with page Emmett.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Taron Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Taron Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Taron agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Taron and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I couldn't agree more and will give this to Kieran to be delivered to the table.

SAEED MALEKPOUR

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Mr. Saeed Malekpour, a resident of Richmond Hill, was detained and arrested in Iran in October 2008 and has been imprisoned since then; and

"Whereas Mr. Malekpour has been accused of certain crimes against the Iranian government and last week was sentenced to death; and

"Whereas Mr. Malekpour has 20 days to appeal this sentence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to intervene on Mr. Malekpour's behalf and appeal to the government of Iran."

I fully support this petition, sign it and pass it to page Jonathan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario, mostly from residents of the city of Barrie:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this and am pleased to sign it and give it to Carina.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nipissing, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service, available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and ask page Kieran to bring it to the Clerk for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I affix my signature. Thank you for allowing me to present this petition.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I affix my signature and provide it to Sanjay.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions to do with paving shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course, I support this.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition for professional oversight of the OSPCA.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

1400

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I couldn't agree more, and will affix my signature and get Emmett to take it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal

health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I want to thank the good people of Elmvale, Tottenham and Stayner, who would like their laboratory services returned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2010 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

Mr. Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / Projet de loi 80, Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member from Essex.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Today I am joined here by members of the family of Katelyn Bedard and friends to support Bill 80, which I have just said is to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month, and I want to point out to members that the short title of the act is the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act, 2010.

I want to give you a little bit of a history as to why this act is before us. It was more than just several years ago that a good friend, Jackie Leardi, brought to my attention the family of Katelyn, who were in a battle with her to find a bone marrow match.

This bill has had several stops along the way. The first time it was presented, it just simply wasn't passed on third reading and wasn't made an act. Nevertheless, we, along with the Bedard family, laboured on, and it was reintroduced, only to suffer being on the order paper when we prorogued. So we're back for a third time, and as my good friend from Waterloo-Wellington said a few minutes ago, maybe it's third time lucky. But I think it's more than luck. I want to ask my colleagues here today to support this bill.

I want to give you, as well, some of the background, and it can be said in no better way than in the words of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association:

"If Only There Had Been a Donor for Katie

"Katie was such a precious little girl. She loved to sing songs, make crafts and play games with her brother and cousins. She was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) not long after her second birthday. After treatment with chemotherapy, the leukemia went into remission but it eventually came back, just days before her third birthday. The only thing that could cure her of this life-threatening disease was a bone marrow transplant.

"Sadly, nobody in the bone marrow registry was a match for Katie. She never received the bone marrow transplant she desperately needed, and in June 2005, little Katie earned her angel wings. She was only three and a half years old.

"If only there had been a match for Katie in the bone marrow registry. If only more people were aware of the desperate need for bone marrow donors. Please help."

And that's what we're here today to do: to help. Some of you will have joined us in room 163, and in fact, you still have about an hour to do so, to be swabbed to be on the bone marrow registry and the stem cell registry, where it may be, some day down the road, that you could help.

We often have private members' bills that come before the Legislature that are for great causes. Frankly, I think that's what private members' business should be more about, and that is where you can bring those issues before the Legislature that are personal matters, that touch us all, and that we, as backbenchers and opposition members, have the opportunity to bring issues and have them brought forward and be meaningful. In all honesty, that's the reason that I'm supporting the bill that I have proposed today.

Bone marrow transplants are simply life-saving. To do so has become, I think, even easier than it used to be. My colleague from Oakville will be speaking today to this matter, as well as my colleague from Nipissing, and they will explain to you just how easy it is to become a life-saver. I encourage you, after listening to them and us and yourselves, to do so.

My colleague from Oakville may repeat this, but there is a match out there somewhere for every individual who needs a bone marrow transplant. It's finding that match. By setting aside a month in which the advocates of bone marrow donation can use that month to kind of bring people together and to emphasize, advertise and promote how important it is to give this life-saving chance—why, I know that all of us would want to do that.

Bone marrow is located in most bones and is responsible for manufacturing blood cells. Certain diseases such as I just mentioned—leukemia—cause the bone marrow to malfunction and to produce abnormal cells. For many people suffering from these diseases, a bone marrow transplant is the only hope for long-term survival.

A bone marrow transplant is a procedure where a patient's own bone marrow is destroyed, using high doses of chemotherapy and radiation, and normal bone marrow cells are infused in much the same way as a blood transfusion.

The healthy bone marrow can come from a variety of donors, depending on the type of disease—the patients

themselves, a sibling or a parent, umbilical cord blood and unrelated bone marrow donors. That's really what we are trying to focus on: the unrelated bone marrow donors. Obviously, family and friends are close by and are always willing to donate. But it's the unrelated, that one match, perhaps, that's out there, that we're looking for.

Also, through this month-of-November bill, if it were to be passed, we want to promote this to a number of areas, a number of communities. Just for your information, on the bone marrow registry today, of the total, 1% are aboriginal, 1.6% are East Indian, 3.6% are Asian, 0.3% are Hispanic and 83% are Caucasian.

You say, why do I mention that? The bone marrow matches are, in many cases, specific to different ethnic groups, and we want to encourage in this great country of ours, which is so multicultural, getting to those groups who may not understand that their bone marrow may be a unique match to one that's needed. We want to encourage more and more people of all ethnicities to register on the bone marrow registry and the stem cell registry.

1410

I don't know that there's a lot more I can say that would add to the urgency of what we are speaking about today. I hope I get the support of my colleagues so that through this we are better prepared to answer the call from those who need our support.

I would point out and will emphasize, perhaps through our discussion today, that everyone who might consider being on this registry has to be between the ages of 17 and 50. I was asking today, when we were downstairs and they were doing the swabs, if the swab could tell how old you are, because I thought that maybe I'd sneak in a bit under the wire.

Interjection.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I hear a chuckle over there. You know that I'm a long way over the wire. Nevertheless, it is between the ages of 17 and 50. We want to be able to get that kind of information out and support those who are dedicating their lives to spreading the word, to encouraging more people to register and to do that which will give something life-saving to a number of individuals.

I really appreciate the fact that the Bedard family and their friends have joined us today and that they've joined me in this journey—or I have joined them in a journey over the last few years—to have this bill see the light of day. I certainly would appreciate and ask for the support of all my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to rise today to speak on behalf of the PC caucus. I will be joined by my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills on the member from Essex's Bill 80, which would mark November as Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month.

I would like to commend the member for bringing forward this important bill, and I'd also like to thank

Katelyn Bedard's family and members of the association for joining us here in the Legislature today. We are certainly going to speak in favour of it and vote in favour of it, because it certainly has the potential to save many lives in Ontario.

For those who are listening to this debate today, it is really important to spread awareness about the need for bone marrow donations and stem cell donations. I would like to speak for just a few moments on the ease with which one can be connected with one match and put oneself on the list.

As everyone knows, the importance of bone marrow is the concentration of stem cells. Stem cells are vitally important and useful due to their immaturity and their ability to develop into any of the cells that are present in the bloodstream. As the member from Essex indicated, bone marrow is found in most bones and is responsible for manufacturing blood cells.

Certain diseases, such as leukemia, cause one's bone marrow to malfunction and produce abnormal cells. For many people suffering from these diseases, a bone marrow transplant is the only hope for long-term survival. However, fewer than 30% of patients who need stem cell transplants are able to find a match within their own families. The rest are forced to rely on the hope of finding a matching unrelated donor who has volunteered to give stem cells to anyone in need. Therefore, the need to put yourself on the registry and be available is of vital importance.

Stem cell transplantation can be achieved through unrelated donors in one of several ways. The first is through bone marrow donation, where marrow is collected during a day surgery procedure. The donor receives anaesthesia and the marrow is removed with a needle, generally from the hip bone. Secondly, through peripheral blood stem cells, the stem cells can be removed. In this case, the donor is awake, an IV is inserted into the donor's arm, and the stem cells are filtered out of the blood. The procedure is virtually painless and much like having blood taken in a simple procedure. Prior to the stem cell collection, the donor receives a special drug called Neupogen to stimulate a greater production of stem cells. Finally, stem cells can also be found in umbilical cord blood.

It's easy to join the Canadian bone marrow registry. It is known as OneMatch. First, I should mention that joining OneMatch is entirely free. The donor will not be charged for any part of the testing or donation process. The potential donor can even sign up online by simply indicating their interest and by filling out a questionnaire. Certainly, my staff members are in the process of doing that today, and I would encourage all of the other members, both themselves and their staff members, to join up as well. Canadian Blood Services, with OneMatch, has made the process so comprehensive that from being tested to joining the list doesn't even require a trip to the doctor's office.

Once approved for the program, OneMatch will send a testing kit directly to the donor's home, where the donor would perform a simple cheek swab and return the testing kit to Ottawa for processing to be added to the list.

That procedure is available here today at Queen's Park. If you are contacted as a donor, OneMatch will pay all transportation and accommodation fees—so, as I mentioned, the experience will not cost the donor anything. It is a completely—well, not completely, because there are risks with anaesthesia, but a relatively risk-free procedure, and complications are very rare.

In order for a patient to receive a stem cell or bone marrow transplant, as mentioned, the donor must be of the same ethnicity. In the Canadian bone marrow registries, ethnicities other than Caucasian are vastly under-represented. Last year, OneMatch made a national call for non-Caucasian donors and they report that there have been 3,600 non-Caucasian new donors as a result. So we are making progress, but still there is much to be done.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage all members to join, to see if you can become a donor, and encourage your constituents to do so as well, perhaps through your websites. Please try to spread the word as much as you can, because this is really vitally important and can mean the difference between life and death for so many people in Ontario.

Again, I would like to thank the member from Essex very much for bringing this important awareness step forward, and again, thank you very much to Katelyn's family and friends and members of the association for joining us here today at Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the member from Essex for bringing this bill, Bill 80, forward. This is a bill that the caucus of the NDP will be supporting wholeheartedly.

I would also like to thank the family, friends and supporters of Katelyn's parents. You see, Katelyn's parents had to live through a tragedy; none of us wants to go down this path. They lost their little girl. But what they did is just fantastic. They turned their grief into action. Rather than feeling sorry for themselves, they decided to help others so that no other parents ever have to live through what I could just imagine was the horror that they had to live through, and that is knowing that there is a treatment that could save the life of your child, yet you're not able to find a match. What they have done with their grief is turned it into positive action to make sure that they bring awareness to this so that people join the registry and basically get the chance to save a life.

My colleague has talked about how easy it is to join the registry, but right here, right now, today, the members of this Legislature have a chance to help out. We have a chance to bring forward this bill, to make it into legislation so that from now on in Ontario, the month of November will be recognized as Bone Marrow Awareness Month. We will have done our small part to bring awareness to this important issue. Those people work day in and day out to bring awareness to this issue. They are asking for our help. All we need to do is stand up, be counted and vote in favour. Pretty easy, isn't it? And look at what this could bring. It brings awareness. Every

year in November, people who haven't joined will have a reminder that, "Hey, this is something easy to do."

1420

The member from Nipissing and I went to room 163 today, where we joined the registry. The whole thing, from getting there, being greeted and leaving, took me less than 10 minutes. It is very easy, and it is painless. I know when people think about bone marrow and stem cells, there's a lot of people out there who are afraid of needles. There's none of this. They give you something that looks like an extended Q-tip, you put it in your mouth, and you put it in the little pouch—voici, voilà, done. You do it yourself. It takes 20 seconds, and you're done. It's pretty easy. Plus you fill out your name, and you sign. The whole thing takes no time at all, and you are doing one small part. You are saying, "If I can help out another human being in need, I will do it." Isn't that something great? Everybody wins. How could you say no?

This bill has been brought forward. It is now called the lucky third time bill because this is the third time that this easy idea has been put in front of this House. I have a feeling, having heard from all three parties represented in this Parliament, that we will vote in favour. It will pass second reading. But in order for it to become law, the responsibility rests 100% on the shoulders of the government. Why wasn't this bill brought forward to committee, to third reading and to receive royal assent?

To me, this is the theory of "do no harm." Nothing bad can come of this. We are bringing forward awareness. We're not going to force anybody to go on the registry if they don't want to. It is completely voluntary, it doesn't cost anything, and it could change so much.

I never met Katelyn—I went online today and saw a few pictures of a very cute little three-year-old—but I've seen many, many children in pediatric wards fighting the same disease that she fought. I have seen young adults, as well as adults, facing the same dilemma that Katelyn faced some time ago now. It is very stressful.

As was mentioned, in close to 70% of the cases, you can't find a match, although we all know that the match is out there. It is out there. We all have a match, but the matches are not there because the awareness is not there. People have not put their names on the registry, so those people often face really tragic events.

Twenty-five years ago, I joined the first oncologist that ever came to northeastern Ontario. It was Dr. Cunningham. They had put a team together, and I volunteered to work on that team. Cancer treatment 25 years ago was nowhere near where it is now: 25 years ago, people saw a diagnosis of cancer more or less as a death sentence. But things have changed; it's not like this anymore. Cancer is not a death sentence. There are effective treatments that will bring you quality of life. You will join the tens of thousands of Ontarians who are cancer survivors. There are procedures such as bone marrow transplants, such as stem cell transplants, that give a second lease on life to people who otherwise will die. It's as simple as that.

We have this available. If your family can give, it's wonderful, but often there's no match within the family, so you have to rely on the registry. For the registry to be effective, the more people we have on the registry, the more lives will be saved. It's as simple as that. We all have a match out there; it's just a question of finding that person.

Those people work hard. We have our little part to do. As parliamentarians, I think we all come to office for the same reasons: We want to help people; we want to do some good for the people of Ontario. Well, here's an opportunity for all of us to do some good that won't cost the province a cent. I know we're in a deficit and we have to watch our pennies. This won't cost you anything. We're talking about awareness, allowing the province of Ontario to recognize the month of November as Bone Marrow Awareness Month. That's it; that's all. A pretty simple bill. Here again, the member for Essex is nodding his head. Yes, it is a simple bill and a bill that should be supported, but it hasn't been.

When we look at the types of diseases and cancer that can be treated with stem cell transplants and bone marrow transplants, there are quite a few. The best known of them is certainly leukemia. There are all sorts of statistics on the hundreds of thousands of people who will be diagnosed with leukemia—I'm just looking for my stats right now. They're in the hundreds of thousands; 235,000—I'm going by memory—for children and about 198,000 for adults. That's a lot of people, and one of the treatment options is what we're talking about today: stem cell transplants and bone marrow transplants.

If we want to help those hundreds of people who may very well be faced with the only treatment option that is available to them, a transplant—we all know that we have a match out there, but that match, for some reason, didn't know about the registry, didn't know how easy it was and never got registered, and then the horrific consequences rolled out and the person died.

There's a good opportunity to do some good. Here again, I'm confident we will pass second reading, and then the next two steps—receiving third reading and receiving royal assent—rest squarely on the shoulders of the members of the Liberal government. It is a Liberal member who brings this bill forward. I'm looking forward to hearing what some of their members have to say. I've already talked to the member from Nipissing and I know that she will be speaking in favour. I hope that this goodwill that we see in this chamber today will be translated into action, so that this bill goes to committee, if need be, receives third reading—and I can guarantee you, if it comes for third reading, the NDP caucus will support it, no questions asked—and then receives royal assent.

You will bring awareness. You will make sure that more and more Ontarians know about the registry and will add their names to it. It has been mentioned that you can go on the Internet right now and ask for a kit. They will send it to you in the mail. You take the long-stemmed Q-tip, put it in your mouth, put it back in the envelope and mail it away, and voilà, you've done it.

That's all you've got to do. Then, if the opportunity arises, you make the decision that needs to be made in due time, but at least you have the possibility of knowing that if somebody needs you, you will be there for them.

Il me fait plaisir d'apporter mon appui au projet de loi 80 qui a été apporté par le député d'Essex pour essayer de créer une banque où tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes qui sont intéressés peuvent donner leur nom pour la transplantation de cellules souches. Une transplantation de cellules souches est une procédure médicale, mais pour s'inscrire sur la liste, c'est tellement facile : on prend une espèce de grand Q-tip, on frotte à l'intérieur de la bouche, on met ça dans une enveloppe et voilà. C'est tout ce que vous avez à faire. On ne parle pas de seringue, on ne parle pas de piqûre, on ne parle de rien de ça. C'est extrêmement facile, et vous pouvez ajouter votre nom à la liste pour être sûr que si vous ou un membre de votre famille vous retrouvez avec une maladie sérieuse pour laquelle le seul traitement est la transplantation de cellules souches, il y aura quelqu'un en Ontario qui pourra vous aider. On sait qu'on a tous quelqu'un qui pourrait nous aider, mais si cette personne-là ne sait pas qu'elle peut s'enregistrer, elle ne le fera pas.

Le projet de loi est simple : créons le mois de novembre comme un mois dédié à la transplantation de cellules souches.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and speak to Bill 80. As the previous speaker, the member from Nickel Belt, just mentioned, this surely is a bill whose time has come. This bill should have gone through in previous readings but for whatever reason it didn't.

Certainly the intent of the bill is to raise awareness amongst the public in Ontario, in our own communities and throughout the country. It's about 28 minutes after 2; right now, to anybody who can hear or see these proceedings, there's a bone marrow donor clinic taking place here at Queen's Park, as we speak, that doesn't close until 3 o'clock. So if you're within hearing or seeing, or if you plan to attend the one at Queen's Park, you've still got about half an hour to get down to room 163 and actually become a donor. Perhaps what you do within the next half-hour this afternoon will save somebody's life.

This bill gives us a tremendous opportunity to correct a misconception that exists amongst the Ontario public, the Canadian public, that somehow donating bone marrow to another person is a painful and very, very intrusive procedure. In fact, from what I've learned from my association today—I had the pleasure of meeting Bryan Bedard from the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association, members of the family, members who are helping him—a wonderful man doing some wonderful work.

In my own constituency, I've had the privilege of meeting Kim and Mike Smyth. Now when I first spoke to Mike Smyth, his son David was still alive; he was lying in a hospital bed in Hamilton with leukemia. They were

searching for a donor. They were searching for a donor on the national registry, they were searching for a donor on the international registry, and they couldn't find one.

I, up until that time, carried the same misconception that donating bone marrow to another person was something that you really had to think about because it was going to put you through a lot of pain as well. I found out that exactly the opposite is true. It is so easy, as previous speakers have said. It's simply a matter of putting a large Q-tip in the four corners of your mouth, having that Q-tip analyzed, finding out if you're a donor or not; and then there's a number of ways that transplant can take place.

Each year, hundreds of Canadians need bone marrow transplants to treat what are potentially life-threatening illnesses. David Smyth was one of those people. David was 20 years old and he attended Trent University. His donor was not found. We had planned a donor clinic at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital on a Tuesday; unfortunately, David passed away the Friday before.

So there certainly are some things we can do to this process to make it speedier and make it better. As it stands right now, in Canada 800 Canadians are hoping to get that phone call today that a match has been found. It probably isn't going to happen because we've only got 250,000 Canadians that are registered on the Canadian Blood Services OneMatch stem cell and marrow network. It simply is not enough to support our population, if you do the math. The goal is two million people. We need two million people on that registry; we need to increase it fourfold.

I like the goal of this bill because what the member from Essex is doing in making November Bone Marrow Awareness Month is sending a message or assisting in sending a message to all Canadians and to all Ontarians that they can do something very, very simple that can have such a profound effect on an individual's life or death, and can have such a profound effect on that family as well.

We need people to be aware of how quick and simple it is to get registered. As I said, we've got a clinic right down here at Queen's Park today. It's been mentioned that you can do it online at onematch.ca. They will mail the kit to your home; you can mail that kit back to them.

What I'm also announcing today is I'm challenging every member in the House from every party. It's one thing to talk about this; maybe it's time we all went out and did something about it. We all have medical facilities in our own community. We all have hospitals in our own community. Working with Canadian Blood Services, I'm challenging every member of this House, every MPP in this House, to host a clinic of their own. Canadian Blood Services will assist you in that regard. It's a fantastic educational experience. You learn an awful lot about the process, and you will find that the people in your community respond like they did in Oakville.

I understand that one is being held November 10. The member for Oak Ridges–Markham is hosting an MPP clinic on November 10 to look for potential bone marrow awareness recipients. The member from Essex is taking up the challenge. The member from Brantford is taking

up the challenge. The member from Peterborough is taking up the challenge.

The efforts of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association are going to contribute to growing awareness. Making November Bone Marrow Awareness Month is going to assist in that regard. This surely is a bill that every member of this House can support, should support, so that the Katelyns and the Davids of the world who simply didn't get the match they needed will get the match they need in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to join in this debate this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month, which has been brought forward in this House this afternoon once again by the member for Essex.

I commend and compliment the member for Essex for his persistence in this regard. I'm aware that he has brought it forward in the Legislature on two previous occasions. As we said earlier, this is the third time and we hope that this time the bill will pass into law. I would encourage all members of the House to support it.

I want to welcome and thank the Bedard family for joining us today. I think your presence here is very much appreciated by all of us. I'm sure it's a day of mixed emotions for all of you, but we are delighted to have you here today and we look forward to getting to know you better.

Our caucus certainly is supporting this measure. The member for Whitby–Oshawa spoke in support of it—she's our health critic—and I know that her sentiments are applauded by all of us on this side of the House.

I would like to say, on behalf of my family, certainly, that we have an interest in this issue. My wife has been a blood donor for many years and has gone many times.

I think we all understand the importance of blood donation. Many members of this House, perhaps, weren't as well aware of the opportunities that exist for bone marrow donation and how it works. Certainly, given the fact that the clinic is still in progress, as we've heard many times this afternoon, I intend, after I finish speaking, to go down there and be perhaps one of the last ones before it closes. I hope that it's still open in time for me.

At the same time, I think it's important to talk about some of the other efforts that are being made to encourage organ donation. I want to compliment my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who has a private member's resolution before the House right now.

Also, I want to remember the Royal Canadian Legion and the work they do to encourage organ donation. As an associate member of the Legion, of course, I have signed my membership card on the back of it, to indicate my willingness to have any of my organs used, if needed, upon my passing. I know that there are a number of members in the House who have brought forward other initiatives to encourage awareness of organ donation, and those are to be commended too.

But let's again focus on this one, because this is so important to so many families, and there is an issue of

awareness that needs to be raised. Certainly, by bringing forward a private member's bill like this one and passing it into law, I think we would be, as a Legislature, making a point and doing the right thing to encourage greater awareness of the need to register on this registry and to ensure that if we are matched with someone who is in need, that through a simple procedure, we could show our caring for humanity by participating and, hopefully, saving another person's life.

I'm pleased by the tenor and tone of the debate this afternoon. This is a non-partisan issue. I think members from all sides of the House would appear to be wanting to support this, and I look forward to its passage.

I know that the member for Essex would be willing to see it move forward to committee, perhaps, and then come back to the House, hopefully before Christmas, so that we could pass this bill into law at third reading.

Once again, I want to commend the member for Essex for his initiative in this regard, thank the members of the Legislature who have spoke to this bill so far, and encourage all members of the House to support it when the vote comes this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1440

Mr. Frank Klees: I too am pleased to rise in support of this bill and to extend my commendation to the Bedard family for their initiative and all of the volunteers and friends who have supported the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association. I believe that really there's no higher calling than making a contribution to ensure that others' lives are enriched and that the quality of life that would be available through a donation such as this can in fact be extended.

I commend our colleague the member for Essex for bringing this bill forward. But I have to say that this is about one of the most straightforward bills that this House will ever see. I, for one, see no need for this bill to go to committee, with all due respect. We had the opportunity to stand in this House and debate a private member's bill just a couple of weeks ago, and it was a straightforward piece of legislation as well, honouring Italian Heritage Month. It was done in the same hour.

I would just say this: I fail to understand why this chamber and the members here, who all are in support of this, would want to waste one more hour of committee time, going through the process of bringing this back here. It's not up to me to do that. When the vote is taken on this bill—which will, in fact, be passed unanimously; we all know that—I would encourage the member to stand in his place and ask for unanimous consent to have this bill read for the third time without going to committee, right here and right now, today. I will certainly provide that support. I would fail to understand why any member in this House would not provide that unanimous consent. What a great endorsement of the member's initiative for bringing it forward—now the third time. Let's move it on and let's make this day the day that this

bill is passed into law, for all of the good reasons that have already been discussed today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the member for Essex's private member's bill, Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month. I want to acknowledge the Bedard family, who are here today, and the Smyth family, who were here earlier, and the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association, which has worked tirelessly to raise the awareness of this issue.

As the member for Nickel Belt stated, she and I were down earlier having our swabs done. I actually thought I was on the registry already, but if I wasn't, I am today, which is very important and very good. I went down with my chief of staff, Krystina Ceccarelli, and I appreciate my staff's support. I know that many of my staff members have gone down, as have many around Queen's Park. We certainly hope we make the 150 new registrants that we wanted to make. To the member for Oakville, I want to thank him in his capacity of making that happen today as well.

David Palmer from my staff, who worked at Canadian Blood Services, brought the kit to my office a couple of weeks ago. He used to work at Canadian Blood Services, and I wanted to know how easy it was now—as it has certainly gotten easier in the last 10 years—to be able to become a bone marrow donor and to register to be a potential donor.

Over 13 years ago, my brother was diagnosed with aplastic anemia; some of the members of the House know this. He was a bone marrow recipient; my older brother was a bone marrow donor. We went through the process. We were tested at the time—all family members. We couldn't find a better match than my brother, who wasn't a perfect match. As such, my younger brother had complications and passed away about 10 years ago. But we are very much committed to the whole process and to ensuring that perfect matches are found for as many people as possible. So I come to this with a personal experience. I see some tears being shed, and I hope not to join you in that today.

I do know that it is a very personal drama for families, and it is so simple for individuals to make the commitment to become a donor. You don't have to leave your home. You go on your computer to onematch.ca and put in your information, the folks at onematch.ca send you the kit, as has been described so many times in the last hour—four long Q-tips—and you do the process yourself. It takes less than eight minutes to fill out the forms and do the Q-tips, and you're done. You mail it in, and you are on the registry.

To date, we have over 250,000 people on the registry. The Smyth family challenge has certainly been to get over two million. As André Picard set out in his column in the *Globe and Mail* on September 30, volume counts. It's about having as many people as possible on the registry to create as many potential matches as possible

for those in need of a bone marrow transplant and a stem cell transplant.

Many will remember, from the last time we debated this issue in the House, a friend of mine, Rosalba Perrotta. Her niece, also a resident of North Bay, in Nipissing, was diagnosed with aplastic anemia—as a matter of fact, the same disease that struck my brother about 11 or 12 years ago. Although this only strikes one in a million, I've had the unfortunate circumstance of knowing two people who suffered from this incredibly debilitating disease. Julie Perrotta was seven at the time. She came from a large Italian family and a large Italian community in my area of North Bay and Nipissing. Many were tested and many got themselves on the registry.

Unfortunately, Julie was not able to find a match within her family; she found a match in Ohio. It was a miracle. If that person in Ohio hadn't taken the time to get on the registry, we would never have found a match for Julie Perrotta. Today Julie is in college. She's 18 and she's in fantastic shape. It's a wonderful, good-news, miracle story that only happened because one person in Ohio had the generosity of spirit to register as a donor, for whatever reason, and saved a life.

Anyone watching today, anyone in this chamber, any one reading the transcripts of these proceedings can change a life—can save a life. All you have to do is register to become a donor at onematch.ca. It is so very simple. The process is simple. We want to increase the numbers.

For those who are interested in more information about the process and about the great work the Bedard family and the Smyth family are doing, I commend again André Picard's article about bone marrow donation in the *Globe and Mail* on September 30—how very simple becoming a registered donor can be. It's a one-shot deal; you do it once. They keep track of your address—you let them know if you move. You can create a miracle and save a life. I think it's a very simple process. I know that many of my colleagues had the chance to do it today. We were so lucky to have it right here in our office. But as I said, you don't even have to leave your home. Go online to onematch.ca, get the information and get registered.

I will take up the challenge presented by the member from Oakville, and we hope to have a bone marrow and stem cell donor clinic in North Bay in the new year. I will work closely with Canadian Blood Services, because they are doing such incredible work. They did ask me to promote their blood donor clinics as well today, given that we do have the opportunity.

But today I also want to say to the member from Essex, who has been a long-time advocate of this—we hope that three times is the charm—and has graciously permitted me the opportunity to share his time today to talk about this, that Bone Marrow Awareness Month will create an opportunity every single year to raise the awareness of the folks of Ontario that it is simple to become a donor. By raising awareness, we gather more potential donors; by gathering more potential donors, we save more lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Crozier has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to specifically thank the member for Whitby—Oshawa, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills, the member for Newmarket—Aurora and his encouragement, the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Oakville and the member for Nipissing. I want to particularly thank the Bedard family for their patience. Just keep up your prayers and wishes that we are successful in eventually passing Bill 80, the Katelyn Bedard bill.

In the 17 years I have been here in the Legislature, I don't think I've had a day when I felt any better about something we've done, and I don't just mean this bill. I think the fact that my colleague from Oakville and I and the Canadian Blood Services and the Katelyn Bedard association were able to come together—we had a news conference today, which I hope some good media will come from. We have the event in room 163, which you still have 10 minutes to get to for the swabbing and the ability to register.

1450

I just think it's been a great day. The one thing that would top it off, of course, would be to get the unanimous consent of my colleagues, and I ask you for that vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. For those watching at home and those visiting us today in the galleries, we'll vote on Mr. Crozier's item in about 100 minutes.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Rick Johnson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should review the Aggregate Resources Act to ensure that if a proponent opts to reapply or demands a site plan reassessment for a quarry and/or pit within five years of being denied, the proponent must cover all of the costs for the government to do an additional peer review study, a cumulative impact study and new series of public consultations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Johnson moves private member's notice of motion 53. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It's indeed a pleasure for me to rise today. This is the first opportunity I've had since being elected last year to present a private member's resolution, so I'm going to work my way through this.

The resolution, as I read, is one that asks for a review to look at something again which is in response to an issue that has arisen within my riding. Many communities across Ontario have experienced the current process of a quarry and/or a pit application coming forward or being reviewed and being either approved or rejected. It is a very long, thorough process that involves a series of checks and balances that most applicants do subscribe to, but there have been and continue to be some that use the application process as a way to find out what they require to move forward to develop their properties.

I know there's a huge issue with this process because aggregates in the province of Ontario are so important to our economy. I know that a great amount of the aggregates are used by the government and municipalities to build our economy. They go into our roads; they go into our systems. But it is an issue which, when it comes into the local communities, has an impact on the local communities. When people are opposed to it or raise issues, these are issues that need to be dealt with.

There is a huge cost in dollars and staff time to do the work required for an application approval. When the approval is denied, and a reapplication comes forward again, there are costs that are involved. It also creates a huge amount of stress within communities when this keeps coming forward again and again.

My resolution, should it be supported by this Legislature, will cause an applicant to make sure that their application is thorough and complete and has complied with all necessary requirements of the application process, whether this is making sure that all the t's are crossed and that the i's are dotted, going forward. What I am requesting through this is to make sure that the process is thorough, that the companies, as they move forward, have done all their homework and don't simply use the process as a way to find out what they've missed because, once a reapplication is made, it means starting over again, which is a huge cost to the government.

Should the application be denied and the appeal process exhausted, what I am suggesting is that the applicant would be responsible for any cost to the government if the applicant chooses to reapply or demands a site plan reassessment for a quarry and/or a pit within a five-year period. These costs would include, of course, the cost for the government to do an additional peer-reviewed study, costs for the government to do a cumulative impact study and a cost for the government to do a new series of public consultations.

I've been asked by several members about the reasons behind my resolution. I would like to relate a story about a group in my riding, which is the Trent Talbot ratepayers' association. The principals in this group have been relentless in their fight for fairness. I would like to mention some of their names and congratulate them for the thorough work that they have done: Mr. Frank Corcker, Jodi McIntosh, Jane Gill, Sharon and Hugh Walker, Sheldon Alspector and Wayne Farrall. They have been an absolute pleasure to work with and a wealth of well-researched information. Their story forms the background for my resolution that is before this House today.

They first were faced with an application to expand a pit to a quarry in 2002. They were concerned about water tables in their area, as the area north of the town of Bolsover contains a huge number of the pits and quarries in this province. Of course, just as we fish where the fish are, that's where the quarries are.

The concern of this group of people is that the new quarry that has been applied for is further south and much closer to where their residences are. They're already experiencing some issues with their water supply;

they're all on water. There's a public well for the city of Kawartha Lakes located very close to this area as well.

It's a concern about, at what point is too much water being taken? They've been asking this question and pushing on this issue since 2002. They have been involved in tribunals. They've been involved in legal fights on this. To date, this group has spent over \$500,000. They've raised all the money in the local community fighting this. It has become a huge issue for them.

I commend them for believing in their cause and working so hard to do this, but once you've appealed—and there have been two issues. When the issue has been turned down and was told no, the quarry cannot go forward. At that point, a reapplication was made. So, at what point does no mean no?

I guess that's what my question is on this. I can see, over a period of time—there needs to be a cooling-off period, which is why I proposed in my resolution that if the ministry chooses to review the resources act, they look at putting in a five-year timeline to allow a cooling-off period and give people more time to look at the issues and make sure that all their ducks are in order.

Once again, I know that the issue of aggregates in this province is so important and that it does take a long time for an application to move forward and go through the system; that, as people apply for these things, there is a lot of work that is done, because we have to look at the proper location for these resources, determine if it's feasible to extract—financial markets, social and environmental constraints, wetlands, provincial policy direction; look at residential development—and all of this is so important to the debate as it goes on within the local communities.

I know that for the province of Ontario, the amount of the resources that are used, especially in putting together our infrastructure—there are huge numbers involved. In 2007, 173 million tonnes were produced, valued at over \$1.3 billion. It is an incredibly important industry. But also, as our population in southern Ontario grows and moves out from the GTA, residences are encroaching on these areas, and we have to do a lot more work on finding that degree of harmony that can exist between local communities and operations like this. This could pertain to a number of other industries as well.

But with this particular group, I think that they've raised some very valid points and, obviously, have put their money where their mouths are when it comes to bringing their issues forward.

It's my hope that, as everyone considers this and talks about this, we'll look at this as a consumers' issue, and a consumer protection issue as well, in that for residents living in a community who raise issues and win their case, that they should be—the fact that somebody can reapply literally the day after and try again is really not appropriate. I think what we need to do is look at this as a chance for companies to make sure that what they've done is the right thing and that they really do their homework as they're going into the process to make sure that everything they have done is correct.

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In this particular issue, in 2002, the Minister of the Environment issued a permit to take water. On November 17, 2003, they issued a certificate of approval. It went to a tribunal hearing to repeal the permit to take water. In 2005, the tribunal decision to refuse to revoke the permit to take water was made. In 2006, an amended decision was made and correction sought by lawyers on behalf of the Trent Talbot River property owners. It went again to another hearing in 2006 before a tribunal, and notice of motion was denied. An appeal was filed. The ministry revoked the permit to take water in June 2007; in September 2007, a new application was made. This has been going on, and it's currently still going on. This group is waiting for results as I speak.

It really goes back to: When does no mean no and who has the final authority here? So it's a simple request to the ministry that they look at the Aggregate Resources Act and see that, if a proponent opts to reapply or demands a site plan reassessment, they're not using the application process as an opportunity to see what they did wrong. In a matter as serious as this, when you're going into a community and people are raising concerns, it is extremely important that everyone is fully consulted on this as it moves forward, and should concerns be raised, they should be raised during the consultation process as the process is moving forward. The process itself shouldn't be used as a way to find out what is needed and what is necessary.

As everybody has a chance to look at this, I look forward to hearing the conversations that come forward on it. A number of my colleagues will be speaking to this resolution. I see that the former Minister of Natural Resources, Mr. Ouellette from Oshawa, is here, and I look forward to hearing his comments today.

Once again, I thank the members for indulging me this afternoon. This is my first go-round on this, as I said earlier. I look forward to hearing debate from my fellow colleagues in the House today. I hope that you will see fit to support this resolution to simply ask the ministry and the government to review the Aggregate Resources Act to ensure that it is applied fairly and that everything we do is working towards a resolution that both the aggregate industries and people in the local communities can deal with. Then life will go on for everyone and everybody will hopefully be happy at the end of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the issue. It's quite a difficult issue to deal with, in that there are so many sides on this. I know that the aggregate industry—sand and gravel people, essentially—are very concerned that, in order to provide a resource in an area where they can utilize the goods, some of the difficulties are that some of these sand and gravel pits are needed to produce sand and gravel in certain areas and then, lo and behold, the trucking costs to relocate a lot of this end up being a huge cost for that. It ends up costing the taxpayer or the individuals who are utilizing it, whether it's the taxpayers in building a road

or the infrastructure development there—it ends up being very costly.

I can recall a number of cases where there were a number of specific organizations, and the one mentioned here was, I think, the Trent Talbot ratepayers association, that didn't want—I'm not sure of all the details, but there were a number of associations that didn't want gravel pits in their areas because, as is Gravel Watch Ontario, they're concerned with the noise, the dust, the rehabilitation and all those aspects of the development of sand and gravel pits.

I recall one case where it would be less than 10 kilometres to truck the goods to where they were going to be used for the development of roads in the area. When those individuals came forward—in this particular case, it was mostly cottagers who were opposed to it—they didn't want all the noise and the sand and gravel. Yet what was going to take place in that case was that it was going to be over 90 kilometres—somewhere in the area of 100 kilometres—to transport these goods, which was going to have that many more trucks on the road in order to bring it into the area to do the development, plus the cost goes up. In a lot of cases, when you look at the infrastructure funding that has been put out there—the stimulus packages—they certainly are needed there, and there's a lot of road development, which requires sand, gravel and aggregate in order to move forward.

All you have to do is simply look at what is taking place on the highway between Parry Sound and Sudbury, the four-laning that's taking place and the vast amounts of sand and gravel that are there. There are a lot of organizations: There's FORCE; there's Gravel Watch Ontario. Quite a few of these are very concerned about, and quite frankly opposed to, producing sand and gravel in the area. But you have to look at all sides of the issue.

The concern I have with this is that it appears to be one specific case that has spurred this on, as opposed to a pattern or a trend. According to MNR's own 2006 figures, there are 2,787 licensed aggregate sites on private land in Ontario and an additional 3,453 aggregate permits issued on crown land. That says we've got over 6,000 cases here, and there seems to be one that is using the process to try to find out where the difficulty is, and they keep reapplying. It's not appealing; it's reapplying.

Some of the difficulty with this is that if, as the member is stating, they're using this reapplication process in order to see what they did wrong, then it should be very much like the Trillium process, where they provide individuals to guide somebody through. If they have to go through a process because nobody is going to tell them what they did wrong or what they're doing right in order to find out how to correct it, then how do they move forward? The end result is that they have to come forward.

In this particular case, it was water extraction. As the member mentioned, on November 7, 2003, a water extraction permit was given by the Ministry of the Environment. Just so that people understand, in a lot of cases when you dig gravel pits—these are open pits; these aren't closed mines—you dig down into the sand and

gravel in the area and water starts to flow in. You have to extract that water to be able to get to the sand and gravel that you're trying to use for infrastructure purposes. You need a permit through the Ministry of the Environment to extract that water, to make sure that it complies.

Some of the other things are that approximately 85% of the aggregate production takes place in southern Ontario. I wonder why that is. It's because most of the development is happening right here in the south. I know that Mayor Hazel McCallion actually took a strong stand regarding some gravel pits in Caledon. They wanted to make sure they remained open, because the locals in that area were opposed to it.

I also recall another case down in Tweed, where the local paper printed an article dealing with this. The article was substantially from another organization, such as Gravel Watch Ontario or one of these other organizations, although you didn't get that sense when you read it in the Tweed paper. It was regarding a marble quarry—obviously not quite the same as sand and gravel.

I drove down, met the publisher and asked why they printed this article without contacting the ministry. Their response was, "Well, it's twofold. One, it's an article they sent in, so we just printed the entire thing without contacting any of the other players such as the minister or the ministry involved to find out their position." His position at the time was, "Quite frankly, we need the jobs." In that area, there was a lack of jobs; there was a decrease in the number of jobs. I recall that the member was opposed to this quarry moving forward. The publisher of the paper was very specific in saying that they get a lot of individuals coming in—predominantly a lot of cottagers—who don't want any of these aggregate or quarry producers in their areas because they don't want the sand, they don't want the noise, they don't want the dust that takes place, and what happens with rehabilitation. But this publisher's position was that they needed the jobs in the area and it was something that should go through, in their opinion. That's the official position of the paper.

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What needs to take place is, we need to sit down with the various players in this and find out exactly how to move forward. If there are problems in that, as the member said, with the use of process to determine and see what they did wrong in order to make it right, then the ministry, or the various ministries—as mentioned, the Ministry of the Environment was involved or is involved in this case—need to sit down and find out exactly where it is that they need to make sure they are in compliance.

Some of the other aspects include the five years, and how would that play out with the stimulus package that's out there now? Lo and behold, I spoke to an aggregate producer in the member's riding and asked them how that would play out. Quite frankly, they are a small producer—they produce 20,000 tonnes of aggregate on an annual basis—and their sole contract is with the municipality. However, their permit is only good for 20,000 tonnes. If the stimulus package had come in and requested more tonnage for more development in their area, they would have had to make a reapplication.

Would this mean that they would be disallowed because they've had one within a five-year period in order to supply the additional aggregate needed by the municipality, their only contract, to make sure they could comply with the demands that they particularly want in order to supply all the growth—in their case, road development—that's out there?

So there have been a number of aspects that have come forward that really need to be clarified. To try and resolve an issue or have a ministry review an entire process when you have over 6,000 players out there and there's one particular situation that's not in compliance—that's one in 6,000, and I don't necessarily know if the province should be looking to rectify situations for one particular case. If there are additional costs in there that are coming forward, then the minister—or the ministers, in this particular case—should step in and review specific aspects of the case to be able to try to figure out how best they can do that.

As I said before, it's a difficult situation in that aggregate is in large demand. A lot of individuals don't want it in production in their location because of, as I said, Gravel Watch Ontario—they want to look at the noise implications, the dust implications and the rehabilitation. The average individual may not realize that every tonne of aggregate that's taken out pays a fee for rehabilitation. There are a number of particular cases in Ontario whereby these locations have actually gone forward and provided fishing locations, where there is recreational fishing taking place in old gravel pits. Not only that, but there was a hatchery developed in one of these old gravel pits as well. So they are substantially utilized when they come together and look at how they can make it that much better for many more industries or recreations in the province of Ontario.

I recall another case: St. Marys Cement, as a matter of fact. They had an agreement when they built their original facility. The facility has expanded immensely; it's one of the largest employers in one of the local communities east of my riding. What took place there was that, when they had completely utilized the deposit that was located right beside their facility, they were then to move forward with an agreed-upon location that they already had approval to utilize, and, lo and behold, this area had become a recreational area where people enjoyed going in carp fishing and canoeing and birdwatching and those sorts of things in the area. Then there was a huge outcry all of a sudden, after they had invested probably hundreds of millions of dollars in the area to utilize this.

Well, it ended up that the players sat down and came to realize that the old site that was now fully utilized was to be rehabilitated and could take on those additional opportunities for individuals to participate in the canoeing and the birdwatching, which I had done in that area on a number of occasions, but realized that eventually this particular site would be utilized by St. Marys in the production of cement, so that they could produce and provide jobs for Ontario. Quite frankly, quite a bit of the

cement that was produced there was sent outside the province.

I do look forward to hearing a number of the other speakers, to hear their positions on this and to see how it's coming forward. I do have some strong concerns, as I said, that one particular player out of the over 6,000 that are out there may be spurring on an entire change within the ministry. I think that it's something where they could probably sit down with the players involved to work out the details.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm more than pleased to be able to join the debate and support my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

It has been stated that there are over 6,000 quarries and pits in Ontario, so obviously aggregate is not in any shortage to speak of. Aggregate is where aggregate is; there's no question. It is where geologically it has been placed. There are some really good rules around the issue of aggregate close to source. Yes, it's not just used for roads; it's used for toothpaste, shingles and a whole number of things.

The important part here is that in order to get a licence, there are some very strict criteria that are in the Aggregate Resources Act. If I may:

"In considering whether a licence should be issued or refused, the minister or the board, as the case may be, shall have regard to,

"(a) the effect of the operation of the pit or quarry on the environment;

"(b) the effect of the operation of the pit or quarry on nearby communities;

"(c) any comments provided by a municipality in which the site is located;

"(d) the suitability of the progressive rehabilitation and final rehabilitation plans for the site"—because for years, there was no rehabilitation;

"(e) any possible effects on ground and surface water resources;

"(f) any possible effects of the operation of the pit or quarry on agricultural resources;

"(g) any planning and land use considerations;

"(h) the main haulage routes and proposed truck traffic to and from the site;

"(i) the quality and quantity of the aggregate on the site;

"(j) the applicant's history of compliance with this act and the regulations, if a licence or permit has previously been issued to the applicant under this act or a predecessor of this act; and

"(k) such other matters as are considered appropriate....

"No licence shall be issued for a pit or quarry if a zoning bylaw prohibits the site from being used for the making, establishment or operation of pits and quarries."

That's pretty clear.

It's not just one individual. The fact of the matter is that we have a significant number of people who put forward applications for quarries. As my colleague has

indicated, it's a one-point-something billion-dollar business; it's very lucrative. It's also necessary as part of our social fabric, in that we need to have toothpaste and roads etc.

But the fact remains, when it impacts the water resource, when it impacts the communities—and we're not talking dust and noise and sand here; we're talking when it impacts the foundation of their homes—when it does have a total effect on the community, and when the ministry has said no, it's no.

It's a very long, arduous process that the proponent goes through, sometimes two to three years, when they must engage the public. If the public brings up something that they're not aware of, they must engage the public on those issues. They must satisfy the ministry. So nothing new comes out at the end of this. The whole process allows the proponent—the applicant, in this case, who wants to put in the quarry—and the people who are opposed to it, for whatever their reasons may be, or who are for it, in some cases, to come together over a significant period of time.

If that applicant wants to draw water, then the Ministry of the Environment gets involved, because the impact of the water on the aquifers is significant. When you get into places such as the Kawarthas, it is very significant, because it draws the water from other aquifers. So the Ministry of the Environment takes this very seriously. At the end of the day, if they say no, it's no.

What happens in some cases is that some proponents—not all—fold their hands and say, "We'll just wait for the next government to come in." That's the truth of it. Or they'll say, "What the heck; we'll just submit it," and the cost of those two or three years that's been borne by the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, suddenly is borne again.

I think what the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is saying is, let's have a second thought about that. Are we, in fact, prepared to allow this process to continue again when it's really an unnecessary process, unless something absolutely dramatically new has occurred that we didn't know about and had two or three years to figure out?

1520

So I don't think we're looking at all of the 6,000, but we are looking at the cost that is borne, which is substantial, by the people of Ontario, the taxpayers of Ontario, who, we must have high regard for in terms of how we utilize their dollars, so that when we've gone through this process and this process says no, there's a darn good reason for it. We've given you the reasons. You've had the public exposure. You've had the ability to bring in all your experts. No is no. You can't reapply tomorrow.

I think that's really well worth looking at. There's nothing worse than a frivolous lawsuit, nothing worse than a frivolous application, because it does no justice to either the person who is applying or the people of Ontario who have to deal with the application.

So kudos to you, member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, for actually thinking about how this is impacting your community and, in fact, many communities, not just one, right across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I hadn't expected the pleasure quite so soon.

I think we should look at this resolution and just review. What are we trying to do here? If you pave a road, you've got to use aggregate. The largest user of aggregate in the province of Ontario is, in fact, the province of Ontario itself. Some 60% of aggregate, which is crushed stone, is used in the development and maintenance of roads. If you build a building, if you pour concrete, you've got to use aggregate.

How much aggregate is produced? About 173 million tonnes. Its value, which excludes the cost of transportation, is roughly \$1.3 billion. It's a fairly big industry, too. It employs 35,000 people directly or indirectly and contributes \$3.2 billion to the gross domestic product of Ontario. It's the basis of the \$45-billion construction industry.

What the member raises is what is fair. He says, "Fair doesn't mean you can wait out the decision process," as my colleague from Etobicoke Centre has just explained very, very eloquently. Extensive public consultation is required for all decisions related to new licences and permits to take aggregate, and it's a matter that the province has been studying continuously to make sure that the processes that we use reflect the best practices and are fair and reasonable to all parties.

No one is proposing, and the member is certainly not proposing, that we no longer allow aggregate, because that's silly. We need aggregate for all of the things that use it. We need aggregate to be produced close to where it's used because it's heavy, and transportation beats up roads, causes traffic and is very expensive. You end up spewing greenhouse gases into the air when you're hauling rock, and you end up consuming fossil fuels.

The member is not asking for anything unreasonable. But what he is saying is that by the time a complete permit is done and the ministry has had a chance to evaluate it and has said that, based upon the best evidence available at the time, the answer is no, that for at least five years no actually means no, and that in the event you want to go ahead and say, "Oh, there are mitigating circumstances, and we would like to go ahead in a period earlier than five years," no also means that you're paying the cost, as the proponent, of all of the studies. It's fair, it's reasonable, it's measured and it's a workable resolution. It's one that I think we can support and it's one that I'm pleased to stand here in the House and recommend that members stand up and support at the appropriate time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Look, I'm very sympathetic to the sponsor of this motion. I think it's pretty clear what he's trying to do. He's trying to advocate for members of

his community who have concerns about a quarry operation.

I regret that now I get into the "however." I'm not disputing anything that the author of the motion proposes in the content of the motion, but I'm relying upon research in a briefing note prepared by legislative library research, which indicates that the Ministry of Natural Resources indicates that, "A peer-reviewed study is not currently required as part of a site plan and application under the Aggregate Resources Act," however, "but may be required as part of a rezoning application under the Planning Act. Sometimes the application for a licence or a permit under the Aggregate Resources Act is joined with an application for rezoning under the Planning Act," for the obvious reasons: because that activity, never mind a permit being issued by the government, wouldn't be allowed on that particular piece of property because of the way that property is zoned.

What I did learn, in the course of getting some background material on this—and just to, I suppose, impress you, if you can be impressed, with the fact that I've done some due diligence here: I note that, "A licence for the removal of more than 20,000 tonnes"—and that's metric tonnes—"of aggregate a year will be a class A licence, while the licence for the removal of lesser amounts will be a class B." There. And that has absolutely nothing to do with the request of the sponsor of the motion.

The ministry indicates as well that, "The onus of putting together all of the required information and providing it to the ministry is on the applicant for both licence and permit applications, and there is nothing in the act to suggest that the process would be different for subsequent applications following an initial refusal. However, when the decision is effectively appealed, then the minister may refer the application to the Ontario Municipal Board"—in the event of objections, effectively. "If this type of board hearing is initiated, the objectors and the minister are all separate parties who would generate their own materials in support of their various positions." I don't know whether that's what the member is speaking of when he talks about the applicant being required to pick up the costs.

I am not going to vote against this resolution. I, for one, am not going to vote against it. It's a resolution. It is not binding on the Legislature; it is not binding on the government, and we have seen that, witnessed that, over and over again. But I do want to acknowledge that I think I understand what the sponsor of the resolution is trying to achieve.

I am troubled by the fact that his proposal, if it were adopted, would effectively privatize a subsequent application. I say this because if the applicant were required to pick up all of the governmental costs of considering an application, then government isn't doing its job. We rely upon government to perform that regulatory function.

That comes down to the apparent observation that applicants for these licences have discovered that a failed application does not, in any way, shape or form, prevent a subsequent application. The impression I get is that the subsequent application can literally be made the next day.

I suppose that process is somewhat what akin to judge-shopping in the legal world. If judge A turns down your application, you then try to get in front of judge B, and if judge B turns it down, you try it in front of judge C, and if judge C had a late night and really wasn't that eager to take on a heavy file that morning, you just might get your application granted.

I would suggest to the member that this issue would be a most appropriate one for standing order 126. It seems to me that it would be ideal to put this difficulty before the appropriate committee under standing order 126 so that that committee could consider the matter and make recommendations to the government about possible amendments to the legislation. If the member were to be proposing that there be a prohibition against subsequent applications, that would be clear. It would be something that people could debate on the merits, and I quite frankly suspect there might be some great merit to supporting that.

As I say, I understand what the member's doing. I'm not sure I'm overly comfortable with it. I'm not sure that it's bang-on on all points, but I will not, as one member, be voting against it.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate. The honourable member from Manitoulin-James Bay—James Bay. I'm sorry.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There is an island in my riding, Akimiski Island, up on the James Bay, not on the Great Lakes.

I just want to say upfront that the arguments that my colleague from Welland-Thorold put forward I think are good arguments and, for that reason, I have problems supporting it because I see it as, yes—and I think the point was well made—this is a way of partially privatizing the application process, and I think that is something that is troubling.

The issue to me is that if somebody's made an application and they've been rejected, do they have the right to some type of appeal? That's the bigger issue. Under the current legislation, I believe you do have that particular right, but I'd have to go back and double-check. If not, then there should that be a right to an appeal, and there is a responsibility on the part of the crown in order to afford its citizens the ability to go through that process.

I'm always reluctant to vote against a member's initiative in private members' because you want to give them an opportunity to at least get a hearing and a committee in order to deal with it, but unfortunately, this is a motion and, as my House leader pointed out, it doesn't afford that. I think you would have to find some way of referring this off to committee so somebody can actually have a discussion on it. I want to say that.

Number two, we know that under the aggregate act there's been all kinds of issues over the years. Every minister has had to suffer in regard to dealing with the issue of quarries from both a neighbourhood perspective, the developer's perspective and the ministry's perspective, trying to balance off both those interests.

I think what clearly is a larger issue is, there needs to be a review of the aggregate act, something that is long overdue, in order to deal with how you balance off the need of the developers who need the aggregate and the citizens who need to be protected when it comes to not having that quarry in their backyard.

There was a quarry that was going to be developed in a particular part of my riding in the city of Timmins, and in a fortnight I ended up with the largest amount of telephone calls and emails than on almost any other issue I'd seen for a very long time. So you know this is an issue that people take seriously. I would advocate that, if anything, if this motion goes forward, it should be a call for some sort of review of the issue at committee in order to deal with the broader issues that need to be dealt with within the aggregate act.

But this motion also gives me an opportunity to talk about the issue of natural resources overall. I just want, in the four minutes I have left to say that it is really interesting to see what's happening today with this whole potash takeover, the company in Saskatchewan that is being bought by a foreign company, and what kind of debate that is starting to have with Canada and within Saskatchewan.

I think the part that's interesting is, there's a real contrast between the positions that various provinces have taken when it comes to multinationals controlling our natural resources. I and New Democrats have always favoured that, at the end of the day, these are our public natural resources, and the crown in right of the people has a right to make sure that those natural resources are protected, and that if they are extracted, they are developed in some way that benefits the province, both economically and environmentally, jobs etc.

In Saskatchewan, Brad Wall, the Premier, has decided to go to war. He's almost running up and down the streets of Saskatoon challenging the government to a fight and saying, "We're not going to allow this multinational to come in and take over this large corporation because we worry that the multinational is going to make decisions in the longer term that are going to not benefit the workers in Saskatchewan or the economy of Saskatchewan and the business community."

The contrast to Ontario is quite remarkable. Inco was bought out by Vale, which is now Vale Inco, and Falconbridge was bought out by Xstrata, just to name two of our natural resources companies. When those particular companies were being taken over, we in the New Democratic Party, the mayors in northern Ontario, the chambers of commerce—some of them, not all—and certainly the labour councils and others, were saying, "Listen, if we're going to allow a multinational to walk into Ontario and take over one of the crown jewels such as Inco or Falconbridge, there need to be some sort of conditions attached to the sale, because we worry that those companies which are far away are going to make decisions about the operations in our communities that will have a negative effect on workers in those communities and the local economy."

The government here in Ontario, very differently than Saskatchewan, said, "Well, don't worry. Everything's going to be fine." They tell us they're going to be good to the workers. They tell us they're going to be good to the communities and they'll be great corporate citizens. Go talk to the community of Sudbury today when it comes to the workers and how they were dealt with for a year as a result of a strike, where Vale Inco, a foreign multinational, came in and said, "We will rip away the pension of those new workers that go into Vale Inco." Was that to the benefit of the Ontario workers and the Ontario economy? Absolutely not. But the provincial government here in Ontario, with Mr. McGuinty as the leader, decided not to put any conditions about what these companies can and can't do.

In the case of Xstrata, then Falconbridge, we said the same thing. There need to be conditions on the sale of Falconbridge, so that if a multinational is going to walk in and take over, there has to be a mechanism by which the rights of the province are protected when it comes to what happens to those natural resources in the extraction and how we can benefit. The government of the day, then-Minister Bartolucci and Premier McGuinty, said, "Don't worry. Xstrata tells us they're going to be great corporate citizens." Some great corporate citizens; they shut down the only refinery smelter in Ontario and they said it's okay to take that ore and ship it into Quebec in order to be processed there. I guarantee you: In five or six years' time, that ore is going to be in China, being transformed in a country far, far away.

To the issue of natural resources, I believe there needs to be a rethink in the province of Ontario—because it is a provincial jurisdiction; it's not a federal jurisdiction—as to the ability for us to determine what is the best way—first of all, do we want to extract particular natural resources—mining, forestry, gas, oil and others? And, if so, how is it going to be done and how do we protect our interests when it comes to the environment, workers, the economy and the overall well-being of the province of Ontario? I certainly hope that's what this motion would have been all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the motion today. I want to thank my colleague and friend from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for presenting us with an opportunity to speak to the people of Ontario, particularly the people in his riding who are experiencing this situation.

The members from Welland and Oshawa I believe offered us some review of some of the concerns that are out there as to why this might be causing some concern for them, but I also want to let the member know that I've listened carefully to all of the debate today, and I want to make sure that, from what I perceive—is to talk about the motion. Hopefully, I'll get the nod if he understands what I am trying to say. The motion does not specifically refer to the licence or the permit but is in response to concerns raised by your constituents about

the other acts that are used in this process. That deserves our taking a good, hard look at what that means.

First of all, I do share some concerns about what aggregate is—and we've got the notes. We've heard some of the concerns of what the money is all about, the industry being an extremely important aspect of who we are in Ontario. There's acknowledgment from you and from your constituents that that's not the argument; the argument is not about the industry itself. I want to associate myself with what you're doing today. In private members' time, we are provided an opportunity to bring those issues back from our constituency, those issues that we believe are province-wide, and put them in front of us so that we can talk about them and debate them to see whether or not there is some uptake, as my friend from Welland often reminds us, from the government to understand the issues. Can they work it out with the House leaders? Can they have a discussion about that?

I think you've done exactly what I believe, and I've made the commitment to do—you will be the messenger and/or the voice from the people of your community to Queens's Park to let them know that you've got an issue here that you want to have evaluated.

The other thing that you have also done is you've asked us to review. You didn't ask us to change, you didn't ask us to stop; you asked us to review the circumstances behind the problem that you have been faced with in your community. I agree with that process. I agree that what you've done is an appropriate action on your behalf to make sure that we've done what we can do in order to answer the responses that you need to have for your community.

The member from Welland offers an option that I believe is still available.

All in all, I thank the member for bringing this forward on behalf of his constituency. I for one will be responding to him in that same manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Johnson has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I greatly appreciated the comments that have been made by all the speakers this afternoon. I appreciate the wisdom that they bring to this debate and the experience that has been brought forward as well. I take everything that they say very seriously on this, as do, I'm sure, the constituents on whose behalf I've been bringing this forward.

1540

I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa, Etobicoke Centre, Mississauga-Streetsville, Welland, Timmins-James Bay and Brant for being here this afternoon to speak. A couple of issues that were raised: How would an existing pit or quarry be affected? If they haven't been denied, they wouldn't be affected at all. It would just be a matter that, under this, they would apply to have an expansion. Then, if they were denied at that point, they would be affected, but if they weren't, it would just be moving forward.

My resolution refers to a proponent who has been denied. I view the word "denied" to refer to a process

where all appeals have been exhausted and somebody has come down with a final verdict and said either yes or no.

I once again would like to thank the Trent Talbot River Property Owners Association, the group from Bolsover—Mr. Corker, Jodi McIntosh, Jane Gill, Sharron and Hugh Walker, Sheldon Alspector, Wayne Farrall—for taking the time to raise this issue with me many, many times. I appreciate the House giving me the opportunity this afternoon to bring forward my concerns. I hope that you will support me in this resolution, that we can take a look at the act and maybe find some solutions that will work for people right across Ontario.

I thank you all for speaking this afternoon. I appreciate your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has now expired. We'll vote on Mr. Johnson's resolution in about 50 minutes.

G20 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT LA TENUE D'UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE SUR LE SOMMET DU G20

Mr. Kormos moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 Summit / Projet de loi 121, Loi exigeant la tenue d'une enquête publique sur les mesures prises et les dépenses engagées par le gouvernement dans le cadre du Sommet du G20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Kormos.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Today we have the opportunity to debate An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 Summit. That bill, of course, was tabled in this House on October 5, 2010, by Andrea Horwath. Bill 121 was subsequently tabled by me—it's the very same bill; it's the Horwath bill—so as to facilitate its debate here in this House in a timely way.

June 26 and 27, 2010, will forever be dark days, sad days, not just for the city of Toronto but for Canada. I suppose that if the inevitable movie is made or book is written, one might suspect that it would be titled *If the Bubble Touches Me, You're Going to be Arrested for Assault*. That video, that shocking and rattling video, has now travelled the world, and we've all seen the regrettable image of Officer Bubbles confronting a young woman behaving very peacefully and peaceably and, for somebody my age, in a manner reminiscent of the sorts of protests that we participated in in the 1960s and 1970s. But we saw a police officer, with incredible levels of aggression, anger and malice, confront, in a way that was shocking and disturbing, a young woman peaceably and peacefully protesting. It was shocking and disturbing not just for all New Democrats, we in Queen's Park and those across the province; it was shocking and disturbing

for communities wherever you went in Ontario and beyond. Whether you're in downtown Toronto or whether you were up in Timmins or Sudbury or the Nickel Belt area or whether you're down in Welland, where I come from, or Hamilton, it was the sort of thing that people spoke to us about on a regular basis as we went to the market squares on Saturday mornings. It was folks who came from all walks of life, and all political persuasions, for that matter, who told us how shocked they were about the response to peaceful protest here in the city of Toronto. It was folks who told us how shocked and outraged they were that a handful of hooligans wreaked mayhem on the city of Toronto on Saturday and that the response, by Sunday, was to arrest over 1,100 people, the vast, vast majority of them without charges, and to detain them in primitive, cruel conditions.

John Pruyn is a constituent of mine; I know him. He's 57 years old. He works for Revenue Canada, for Pete's sake. He's an amputee; he lost his leg in a farming accident 17 years ago. John Pruyn is a peace activist. He was at the event with his wife, Susan, and his daughter. He was sitting on the lawns of Queen's Park, which so many people had believed was sort of a safe zone—not safe to commit crimes but safe to be removed from any of the fray that was going on out there. He was attacked by police officers, arrested, handcuffed, had his prosthesis torn off his leg, was hauled off to spend a couple of days in the primitive, makeshift, oh-so-Guantanamo-reminiscent holding cells down on Eastern Avenue, and then was released without charges.

We learned about kettling, where thousands of people were encircled by aggressive police officers and held in the rain in what became a cold night—al fresco, if you will. What we've never learned is, what was the chain of command? Who was making the decisions? Who was giving the orders?

We learned just recently that over 90 Toronto police officers—we don't know how many from other police forces—removed their name badges, their identification badges. I put to you, Speaker, that there is only one inference to be drawn when a police officer removes his or her name tag. That is that they intend to do something that is improper or outright illegal. That's the only inference that can be drawn.

While we can credit Chief Blair with scanning the film footage and discovering 90, one asks, where was the supervision of these police officers out there on the streets of Toronto? I was out there. I saw these police officers. I talked to them. I talked to demonstrators. Where was the supervision of these police officers? Where were the sergeants and staff sergeants, who I know were out there with their police officers, telling their police officers to get those damn tags back on tout de suite, or else there's going to be hell to pay? Well, they were there, but nobody was telling those police officers to put those name tags back on, were they?

Chain of command: Who was calling the shots? Who were the parties involved? A billion dollars later, a thousand-plus people arrested, illegally in most circumstances, the vast majority of them, and the vicious response of the

police by the time Sunday had come around, while the police seemed to be incapable—withstanding thousands of police officers on the streets of Toronto, notwithstanding helicopters circling downtown, notwithstanding all sorts of surveillance, including undercover officers—of controlling the property damage that took place along Yonge Street and one, perhaps two, police cars being torched.

The government members, I suspect, will respond by saying there's a number of inquiries taking place. There are. I look forward to Ombudsman Marin's report, for instance—but limited to a very narrow subject, and that is the subject of the notorious regulation passed by this government, this Premier, in secrecy, then kept secret, and then misinterpreted purposefully so as to mislead police officers and the public about its effect. That's the now-notorious five-metre law, which was phony, which was faked. The law was fraudulent. It resulted in people getting arrested illegally. I, for one, would very much like to know whether this was an instance of the police calling government and calling the shots. That's not how it's supposed to work in a democratic country. It's for government to enact the law; it's for police to enforce it. It's not for police to have a Premier sitting on their lap like a secretary taking dictation and dictating the sorts of laws that they want for a particular period of time. Sorry for the imagery. I apologize. I retract it. I'll do one better, okay, Speaker? Too many young people won't get it, but it's not a matter of Edgar Bergen having Charlie McCarthy sitting on his lap, manipulating the words that Charlie McCarthy says. This is reprehensible stuff. This is very serious stuff.

1550

The Toronto Star, as you know, just recently wrote an editorial saying, "Public Inquiry Still Required." The piecemeal inquiries taking place are not going to be enough to connect all the dots, to fill in all the gaps. There are so many pieces of the puzzle still missing. Why, the House of Commons' public safety committee—I think that's what it's called—Vic Toews, the minister, said there was a reason why the locations of Muskoka and then Toronto were chosen for the G8 and G20, respectively, but for the life of me, he couldn't remember them. I suspect he'd be less inclined to respond so flipantly if he were under oath in a public inquiry. Why a public inquiry? Because a public inquiry, under the Public Inquiries Act, has the power to summons people; has the power to issue search warrants; has the power to hire an investigator; and has the power to, again, require people to testify under oath.

To those who would argue expense, I say, on the contrary, Ms. Horwath's bill so very, very carefully and neatly outlines the very limited scope here. The interest is to:

“(a) inquire into and report on the decisions and actions of the government of Ontario and of Ontario's law enforcement agencies in connection with the G20 summit; and

“(b) make recommendations to the government of Ontario and to Ontario's law enforcement agencies about

how to reduce spending, reduce arrests and reduce violence in connection with similar events that may be held in Ontario in the future.”

This isn't a wide-ranging, broad inquiry; it's a very specific and clear one, and it's one that, in all respects, is quite compact. But it's an inquiry into issues that simply aren't going to be answered by the plethora of ragtag investigations and inquiries being held now, most of which are not public. A public inquiry, by its very name, has to be public.

People in this province and in this country have lost a great deal of confidence in law enforcement and in their government over the course of the time from June 26 through to now. The only way we can restore confidence—because it's a very dangerous thing, when people lose confidence in the criminal justice system, isn't it? It's a very dangerous thing when people lose confidence in their ability to ensure that the state protects their constitutional rights, isn't it? It's a very dangerous thing, and no good can come of it. The only way to restore confidence is to have a public inquiry, one that's transparent, one that produces the facts, reveals the facts, pulls the layers back.

Good grief, we had OPP involved. Where was Julian Fantino on this matter? We had RCMP involved. Where was the RCMP commissioner on this matter? We had police forces from Montreal and other provinces. Who was supervising them and to whom were they responsible? Why was there the major shift in policing perspective from Saturday through to Sunday? These are questions that have to be asked because the answers are imperative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I certainly commend the member from Welland for bringing this forward. I think it's an important bill that's before this House. We should be examining this and we should be debating this, because it is a very troubling event that occurred in the city of Toronto, the G20 summit.

The major disagreement I have with my colleague from Welland—he talked about Charlie McCarthy—is that the perpetrator, the one who pulled the strings and orchestrated this whole tragic event, was found to be in the city of Ottawa: our federal government. I think we cannot let them off the hook. They basically foisted this summit, as they called it, on the city of Toronto against the will of the elected members of council and the mayor, who said they didn't want it, and if it was to be held, it would be held on the Exhibition grounds. That was denied and overruled by the federal government.

The last-minute switch: Originally, if you recall, this was supposed to be held in Muskoka, in Huntsville. The grandiose plan of the Harper government was to hold it in Muskoka. Then, at the last minute, it got switched without any consultation, without any kind of input from the mayor and the council of Toronto. They said, “You're going to have it in your city. We're going to establish our parameters here, and we're going to do it whether you like it or not.” That was the order from Ottawa.

It was their plan, their idea, their showcase. It was supposed to be a showcase for the world. I agree with the member from Welland: It was a disaster as far as Ontario, Toronto and Canada were concerned. It was the wrong place, the wrong time and the wrong approach.

I will not stand here and defend every police action. Some of them were inappropriate to say the least; we can concur in that. But on the other hand, who put our police, the people of Toronto and also the peaceful demonstrators in this untenable situation? Who dictated that this be the theatre for the G20 summit? Whether it was the RCMP who were supposed to be in charge of the whole operation, they were running the show: "We're running the show. You people in Toronto don't know what you're doing. We're going to have this summit here and we'll manage it."

You put people in an untenable situation—in a frightening situation. Certainly the police officers were in a frightening situation, given the hype, given the intense media coverage, given the confrontational attitude that developed. I think that what happened on those two days was really deplorable. But on the other hand, the perpetrators of those two horrible days are not even discussed here; that is, the federal government which, as I said, managed, orchestrated and financed—and we can talk about the financing of this event, a billion dollars-plus that was hoisted on everyone without any kind of acceptance by anybody. "Here is what it's going to cost. We are going to fund it. We are going to undertake this summit."

I want to quote from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association: "What is needed is a comprehensive review that can examine the decisions and policies of all of the actors involved in the G20. The G20 was a federal summit, hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds. The federal government is therefore best suited to co-ordinate such an inquiry...."

As the member from Welland said, there are ongoing investigations being done by the Ombudsman of Ontario and by former Ontario Chief Justice McMurtry. There is an independent police review being done right now. Also, the Toronto Police Services Board is undertaking and has commissioned an independent review. I think it would be interesting to see whether the federal government has taken this upon themselves. I know they've been doing some hearings in the last couple of days. Again, what they're doing is, they're almost as if the federal government and the federal MPs are questioning what we did in Toronto when they perpetrated it on Toronto and, to this very day, ordinary people in Toronto have never been apologized to for what was perpetrated upon them. That's why we need to hold the federal government to account.

1600

I'm not saying that they're the only ones to blame. There were a lot of mistakes made by all governments in this case. But the main culprit—and the member from Parkdale–High Park refuses to acknowledge that: that the

federal government needs to be held to account here, and I think they should be held to account.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill today, Bill 121, from the member from Welland.

It has been very interesting to watch this process from the very beginning. We've had other G20–G7 summits in our country. Just to answer the previous speaker, that's a choice the federal government has in holding these events. They're considered to be fairly national and prominent events that would help the country in the long run. It's hard to believe we've escalated into this. It sounds like the government members are going to blame the federal government. That's what I take from the previous comments, and it will be interesting.

I know myself that we call for inquiries here all the time in this House. The government never calls an inquiry, and I suspect they will never support this. I think, before an actual inquiry is called, that we should listen to what the McMurtry report says, what the Ombudsman report says and what the internal reports of the police services say. If you look at the history of the Ombudsman, he has never been a really friendly person, in his previous careers, toward policing, so I suspect that any report coming from the Ombudsman will be fairly critical of anything the police could have possibly done wrong.

Up our way, in Mr. Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka's riding, we had the G7, and it went off almost perfectly. We can't be very critical of that. The police did a great job. The leaders went to Deerhurst Inn at that time. Overall, I would say it was a very positive response for that community, for the police services and for all the people visiting from other nations around the world.

What happened in Toronto—I say that a lot of it has to be blamed on the provincial government. We all know that in this House, when we were sitting back on June 1 and 2 of this year, a cabinet meeting took place, a special regulation was passed, and it was somehow put on some kind of a website that we certainly weren't aware of. I know that all the people who came to this city to peacefully demonstrate had no idea that a lot of those rules applied to them.

I've got a copy of the regulation. I'd like to read it into the record, because I can tell you, if you can understand this—you're going to need to have a few Bay Street lawyers just to follow this, I think.

What it says is:

"Ontario Regulation 233/10

"made under the Public Works Protection Act

"Made: June 2, 2010

"Filed: June 14, 2010

"Published on e-Laws: June 16, 2010

"Printed in the Ontario Gazette: July 3, 2010

"Designation of Public Works

"Designation

"1. The following are designated as public works for the purposes of the act:

"1. Everything described in clause (a) of the definition of 'public work' in section 1 of the act that is located in the area described in schedule 1, including, without limitation and for greater certainty, every sidewalk in that area.

"2. The places described in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of schedule 2.

"Revocation

"2. This regulation is revoked on June 28, 2010"—meaning, as soon as the G8 is over, this is revoked.

"Commencement

"3. This regulation comes into force on the later of June 21, 2010, and the day it is filed.

"Schedule 1

"Area Referred to in Paragraph 1 of Section 1

"The area in the city of Toronto lying within a line drawn as follows:

"Beginning at the curb at the southeast corner of Blue Jays Way and Front Street North; then north to the centre of Front Street West; then east along the centre of Front Street West to the east curb of Windsor Street; then north along the east curb of Windsor Street to the centre of Wellington Street; then east along the centre of Wellington Street to the centre of Bay Street; then south along the centre of Bay Street to a point directly opposite the north wall of Union Station; then west along the exterior of the north wall of Union Station to the centre of York Street; then south along the centre of York Street, continuing east of the abutments under the railway overpass, and continuing south along the centre of York Street to the centre of Bremner Boulevard; then west along the centre of Bremner Boulevard to the east curb of Lower Simcoe Street; then south along the east curb of Lower Simcoe Street to the north curb of Lake Shore Boulevard West; then west along the north curb of Lake Shore Boulevard West to the south end of the walkway that is located immediately west of the John Street Pumping Station and runs between Lake Shore Boulevard West and the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre; then north along the west edge of that walkway to the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre; then west along the south edge of the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre to the west edge of the driveway running between the parking lot and Bremner Boulevard; then north along the west edge of that driveway to the north curb of Bremner Boulevard; then west along the north curb of Bremner Boulevard to the east curb of Navy Wharf Court; then north along the east curb of Navy Wharf Court to the southwest point of the building known as 73 Navy Wharf Court; then east along the exterior of the south wall of that building; then north along the exterior of the east wall of that building to the curb of Blue Jays Way; then north along the east curb of Blue Jays Way to the curb at the southeast corner of Blue Jays Way and Front Street West."

If you're a surveyor, you likely can understand what I've said so far.

Schedule 2 is a little bit shorter.

"Designated places referred to in paragraph 2 of section 1:

"1. The area, within the area described in schedule 1, that is within five metres of a line drawn as follows:

"Beginning at the south end of the walkway that is located immediately west of the John Street Pumping Station and runs between Lake Shore Boulevard West and the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre; then north along the west edge of that walkway to the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre; then west along the south edge of the bus parking lot of the Rogers Centre to the west edge of the driveway running between the parking lot and Bremner Boulevard; then north along the west edge of that driveway and ending at Bremner Boulevard.

"2. The area, within the area described in schedule 1, that is within five metres of a line drawn as follows:

"Beginning at the southwest point of the building known as 73 Navy Wharf Court; then east along the exterior of the south wall of that building; then north along the exterior of the east wall of that building and ending at the curb of Blue Jays Way.

"3. The below-grade driveway located between Union Station and Front Street West and running between Bay Street and York Street in the city of Toronto."

How you could ever blame that regulation on the federal government is beyond me. That was passed down the hallway here on June 2, when none of us knew it; it was in secrecy. Anybody who was prepared to go and peacefully demonstrate had no idea these rules applied, not any at all.

I'm quite sure that in a lot of cases, the police may not have understood this, as well. As a result of this misunderstanding and as a result of this lack of communication between these government members and this cabinet—that is why a lot of these problems happened. I blame it fully on Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government. That is who I blame, not Stephen Harper. Stephen Harper paid his way. He paid for the policing costs. He sent the cheque to the OPP and the Toronto police for their costs. It's up to us to do our job in community safety.

You all know full well that the minister only lasted about three weeks after that and he was tossed out of that job. He switched jobs with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. That's my understanding of it. I'm not blaming anything on the police. I think the police did the very best job they could. I talked to the police outside this building from the Barrie Police Service, from the Toronto Police Service, from the OPP. They were hot summer days. The last place they really wanted to be on overtime or anything else was in the city of Toronto fighting off demonstrators or being involved in any kind of scuffles.

I think for the government to come out and say that it's a federal government responsibility is completely irresponsible. This is solely on the hands of Dalton McGuinty. I blame him fully for this. I can tell you, there was absolutely a lack of communication here, and if you do any kind of inquiry or if McMurtry comes out with his inquiry or if the Ombudsman comes out, I hope he'll take into consideration what happened here.

We could have been notified in this House. Every one of us knew about the G20 and the G8. We were here the week that that bill was passed. None of us knew about it until about June 24 or June 25. So anything that happens as a result of this is, I think—I'm hoping that these inquiries that are taking place will put the blame where it actually belongs, and that's at the cabinet table of the McGuinty government.

1610

As far as a separate inquiry, I think you're going to spend money after money after money. I would like to see what becomes of these other three inquiries before I would support another expensive inquiry, because it will be very expensive if we go to a full inquiry. And you know what? We've got a \$21-billion deficit. I'm not sure we've got enough money to afford a coffee at this stage of the game.

With that, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today and congratulate the member for bringing this to the floor of this House. I think it's important that this debate take place, and I've been really surprised today that after all this, the government members would start up and their message is, "Let's blame Stephen Harper again."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just before we start with the third party, I remind members to please use riding names and not first names, that's for sure. Please speak through the Chair so we can have a peaceful afternoon.

Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians deserve answers. Ontarians deserve respect. Ontarians deserve a public inquiry to get to the bottom of what really happened in Toronto during the G20 summit. That is the bottom line. Otherwise, we risk setting a terrible, terrible precedent for the next time a major international meeting takes place in our province. When Amnesty International, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the Law Union of Ontario all say that something is rotten in the cupboard, that means we have to clean house.

Over the course of the G20 weekend, as was already stated, 1,100 people were arrested. That's more arrests than during the FLQ crisis. That's more arrests than at any other time in Canadian history. That's mass arrests, with little or no cause. Only 230 individuals were ever criminally charged. Ontarians of every age and background came to express themselves, which is their legitimate right as citizens of this province and this country, and here in Ontario, in Toronto, many of those citizens were denied that basic freedom. Worse yet, some were repaid with arbitrary police action and detention. The government colluded by enacting a secret law that was translated by police into sweeping new powers, the law that was just outlined by the member for Simcoe North.

Yes, there were ugly scenes; many of us saw them. Yes, there were violent confrontations. But there was also peaceful protest and lawful assembly. Some people had just the bad luck to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Credible journalists and ordinary pedestrians

alike reported acts of intimidation and a nightmarish situation of panic and fear. That is unacceptable.

One of the better-known accounts came from Steve Paikin, a very well-known TVOntario journalist, who witnessed democracy take "a major step backwards" during the G20. In a piece published by the Ottawa Citizen, Paikin described "inexplicable behaviour by too many police officers." One incident in particular left him very confused and, in fact, outraged. Like many journalists just trying to do their job that weekend, Paikin himself was threatened with arrest. Before he could be "escorted" away, he witnessed three police officers punch and elbow Jesse Rosenfeld, a UK newspaper correspondent, when he refused to stop covering a legitimate news story. Paikin called the treatment of "an asthmatic journalist ... all of 5'6" tall ... missing one kidney" an "unnecessary overreaction."

I don't think any of us can forget the incident that occurred at Queen Street and Spadina. The Toronto Star reported that no violence spurred this action by police—no violence. Hundreds of law-abiding citizens were corralled like livestock in the pouring rain. Riot-gear-clad police blocked any opportunity for those people to peacefully disperse. Some were tourists. Some were innocent bystanders. All were left shivering in soaked clothing for over four hours and then released with nary an explanation.

A recent university graduate was caught up in that chaos, and she couldn't believe that she was experiencing that kind of treatment in Canada. She told a reporter, "My charter rights have been trampled. My human rights have been trampled. It's shameful." New Democrats agree.

Deep questions remain about what really happened in Toronto that weekend. The public deserves coherent answers. These answers cannot be provided by the patchwork of investigations that are currently under way. None of the six separate reviews has the mandate or the jurisdiction—or the impartiality, I charge—to ask the fundamental questions.

The faith of Ontarians in the responsibilities of law enforcement, in the accountability of government and in Canadian democracy has been shaken.

We need a formal mechanism for people to share their stories. We need an inquiry with broad scope, binding recommendations and the teeth to subpoena. That's an important issue, and it was outlined by the member for Welland in his opening remarks. It's extremely important, the power to subpoena, to compel witnesses and documents on the public record.

One month ago, I introduced a private member's bill that is going to remedy that wrong, and it's the one we're debating right now, the G20 Public Inquiry Act. It will establish an independent commission, empowered to carry out a full public inquiry. It will probe and report on the decisions and actions of government and law enforcement during the G20. It will provide a fuller account of how more than a billion taxpayers' dollars were spent and whether that money was, in fact, well spent. It will

determine whether the basic human rights and freedoms of Ontarians were compromised that weekend in June.

Yes, I think everyone would agree that the G20 was an important global meeting. Yes, visiting politicians and delegations have the right to convene in a safe and secure atmosphere. But Ontarians have a right to gather and voice their opinions, too, even when those opinions are different than the ones of those dignitaries who are collecting for their meeting.

Ontarians have paid very dearly over the years for this right to collectively gather and voice their opinions in freedom without being accosted by law enforcement and police. They've had this right since the founding of our province. It must be respected and it must be protected.

If there's a consensus among all of the parties and all of the factions, it's that what happened in Toronto during the G20 should never be allowed to happen again. That's why we need a public inquiry: to put this event in the past. We also need a public inquiry to be able to move forward.

I want to say one last thing, and that is on the issue of costs. This bill very clearly sets parameters not only in scope, as Mr. Kormos mentioned, but it also sets parameters in terms of time frames to ensure that this is done in a timely and cost-effective manner: a six-month interim report and a 12-month maximum duration for the inquiry, to hold the line on costs.

I ask, as I finish my remarks: At what price is democracy and freedom going to be protected in this province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 121.

The member from Welland, I believe, knows that I hold him in great respect. His capacity as a trained lawyer is well known. I think his arguments are reminiscent of closing arguments of a case that could be made here today.

I don't necessarily subscribe to his characterization of the independent review commissioned by the Toronto Police Services Board. The Office of the Independent Police Review Director is directly conducting a systematic review. The Ontario Ombudsman is conducting an investigation. There are numbers of civil proceedings that are being pursued as we speak. We've also appointed Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to lead a detailed review of the Public Works Protection Act.

1620

I don't agree with his characterization—and he'll probably check Hansard for this, because somebody else said something that he checked, and I'm sure he'll check this—as a ragtag group of investigations and, as portrayed by the leader, a patchwork, questioning the impartiality of whether or not this batch of reviews, as he's calling them, is going to be fair and reasonable. What I want to do is make sure that Mr. McMurtry's esteem has not been tarnished a little bit by the comments that were being made, in that he will be reviewing the focused discussions on key stakeholders.

My friend opposite is very disappointed that I'm bringing this up simply because I'm not the one who called it impartial. That wouldn't be impartial. I'm not the one who said it was a patchwork and I'm not the one who said it's a ragtag operation. I'm concerned that Mr. McMurtry would not be seen as impartial, as being a Chief Justice of Ontario. I honestly believe that he's going to be doing that work—and he's going to be including in his discussions the legal community. He's going to go to the stakeholders. He's looking for the legal community, the policing organizations, the civil liberties groups, other levels of government, including the federal government, and interested members of the general public. So I hope, as one of my friends from the Tory party, whom I also disagree with in terms of the sole responsibility of the province of Ontario—that we would include levels of government and that the general public will be participating in this.

I also look forward to the Ombudsman's review. His report is going to be on the very thing that we're talking about this evening. I honestly believe that the characterizations of what's been happening here are a little bit rich.

Let me make it perfectly clear, in my position of what I observed. I too agree that we should never have this happen again. I too agree that there were some civil liberties that were removed. And I too believe that there should be some actions as a result of that. The questions I think we should ask ourselves are: What did we learn already, what can we learn further, and where else are we going to show some improvements in this?

Let's talk about the bill that people are referring to, which precipitated the use of a regulation versus a bill—because twice now from the opposition, it's been characterized as a secret bill that was passed. We all know that it was not a bill that was passed. The bill has actually been in existence for over 60 years, and it requires the removal of Second World War-era types of security concerns that were established back then to what they are today. I, for one, look forward to that bill being reviewed and improved upon.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about was the characterization that the civil liberties were totally on one side of this, solely responsible for that removal. I hope we would acknowledge that the tactics of the Black Bloc, as I believe they are called, would not be perceived as “civil liberties” to pursue and not have something to do with this review as well.

In terms of the balance, am I defending actions that were taken by the citizenry to be there to protest? Absolutely not. As a matter of fact, that's the part that I am disappointed in. That's the part that I have been appalled about in terms of the actions. Those kinds of reviews that are taking place right now will take care of that. I would say that the request for an inquiry is a reasonable one inasmuch as the timing part of it; I want to see this part of the process finished. Then we can look at an inquiry. I would definitely be open to do that, because they do have their place in our government, they do have their place in our society here in Ontario, and they have their place to

help us make a better process for it, vis-à-vis the inquiry in Ipperwash, which was called for and was done.

Having said those things, right now as it stands, I was very disappointed in this Black Bloc process that I don't support, and I'm guessing that no one in this building does, because not only did they cause their chaos and their anarchy belief, they also dressed in black from head to toe, perpetrated some of the very extreme things we saw happening and then discarded those robes immediately to blend back in with the law-abiding, peaceful protestors, who, I believe, deserve our respect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The weekend of the G20 was the weekend that civil rights and democracy died in the province of Ontario, in the city of Toronto, and certainly were put to the test throughout Canada.

This was a black weekend, a weekend when we remember the chant, "Whose street? Our streets." We remind ourselves of that. I was part of every single day of the weekend, standing with the Tibetans to demand autonomy and freedom for Tibet one day, a prayer vigil of faith leaders where we were muscled and refused to allow to sit on the street that we own the next day. And finally, I came home to Parkdale—High Park to witness the occupation—I can only call it that—of Parkdale. Most of Queen Street was shut down—hundreds of police in riot gear. I personally witnessed people being harassed, handcuffed and kept without notice or charge.

This is unconscionable. One of the screams—and I say it's a scream—that we yelled in my community, on my street during the G20 was, "We want our police, not their police." That's how concerned our citizens were with what was happening in their community.

Certainly Roy McMurtry is an honourable man. We have no problem with Roy McMurtry. We have a problem with the limitations of his inquiry. He is not able to subpoena testimony from cabinet members, and we want testimony from cabinet members. He is not able to subpoena testimony from Dalton McGuinty, and we want to hear from Dalton McGuinty.

Listen, I'm not a fan of Harper—far from it—but we have to admit that those across the aisle bear some responsibility for what happened here that weekend, and we want to know where that responsibility started and where it stopped—absolutely.

I'm going to leave some moments for my friend from Trinity-Spadina.

It's a weekend I'll never forget. It's right up there with the War Measures Act—another attempt by Liberals to deny civil liberties to Canadians. This can never happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My friend from Welland has covered much of the field, but he started by asking who was in charge. The real question for me is, no one was in charge. Why? That is the question.

In my mind, the reason why no one was in charge was because no one wanted to be held accountable. Nobody wanted to be blamed, because blame will come and

would come, and they knew it. If we knew who was in charge, blame would be assigned. It was organized confusion, it was predictable confusion and it was systemic.

I remember that within the police force nobody knew who was in charge, but Chief Blair seemed very confident that the five-metre rule was there in the regulation and he seemed to be very clear the day before. The day after, it wasn't so clear anymore. Lawyers looked at it again. It wasn't clear. When they called the Solicitor General, he was not available for comment, said the Toronto Star. The cover-up was systemic.

The outrage in my riding was swift. I have letters from three people I thought I would be able to read out of 20 that I got, one from Patrick who said, "Like many others, I feel that a wide-ranging and in-depth public inquiry into how and why the security was handled as it was is essential. Without this, the trust in our police services is undermined and our charter rights trampled with impunity." I had other letters that I wish I could have read into the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member Mr. Kormos has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Referring to the recent Toronto Star editorial, let's go down the list. "Laws were changed without public input; the public was misinformed about broadened police powers; unconstitutional searches occurred across the city; excessive force was used to disperse peaceful protestors ... more than 1,000 people were arrested, held in an overcrowded detention centre and not allowed to call their family or a lawyer. More than 900 of them had not done anything wrong and were subsequently released without charge."

Never before have we witnessed in this province such an outrageous and aggressive attack on fundamental freedoms and on basic and clear charter rights. We reverted to barbarism on June 26 and June 27. For the life of me, I can't understand why the people across would not want some light shone on this sordid moment in the province's history.

Regulation 233/10 was made in secret. For the life of me, I can't understand why government backbenchers wouldn't be as outraged that they were kept in the dark as well, because they've had to wear it in their ridings, weekend after weekend.

A public inquiry is the only way we're going to clear the air. A public inquiry is the only way we're going to build a system where this can never happen again.

I do encourage people to go to the website torontog20exposed.ca—

Interjection: G20.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —torontog20exposed.ca—it's an age thing, Speaker. I hope folks will bear with me. Torontog20exposed.ca: There is a movie starring, amongst others, Officer Bubbles. I suspect people will find it most interesting.

Please, colleagues, support this bill. Support this endeavour to nestore some civility and some fundamental freedoms and rights back to Ontarians, and to restore some confidence of Ontarians in their government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's time to vote on today's ballot items. The time provided for public members' private business has expired.

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW
AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2010
LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2010
SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 46, standing in the name of Mr. Crozier.

Mr. Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Crozier?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would respectfully ask for unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent for the bill to be ordered for third reading? Agreed. So ordered.

Just for members' information, we'll deal with this matter again if it is called for orders of the day after the next couple of votes.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 47.

Mr. Johnson has moved private member's notice of motion number 53.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On division is noted.

I heard "carried on division." I didn't hear any noes.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would just like to thank everyone for the support and for the wise counsel that has been offered during the day. I appreciate that. Thank you.

G20 PUBLIC INQUIRY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT
LA TENUE D'UNE ENQUÊTE PUBLIQUE
SUR LE SOMMET DU G20

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 48.

Mr. Kormos has moved second reading of Bill 121, An Act to require a public inquiry into government action and spending in connection with the G20 Summit.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1633 to 1638.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Gélinas, France

Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Prue, Michael
Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dunlop, Garfield

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hardeman, Ernie
Jaczek, Helena
Klees, Frank
Kular, Kuldip
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Miller, Norm
Moridi, Reza

Pendergast, Leeanna
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 8; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters related to private members' public business have now been completed. I do call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Based on the spirit of the House that was expressed earlier today, I seek unanimous consent to put the order for third reading of Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month, to be called immediately, and that the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW
AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2010

LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2010
SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

Mr. Crozier moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 80, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / Projet de loi 80, Loi visant à

désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Congratulations.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: just a brief comment. On behalf of the Bedard family, I want to thank my colleagues today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): To make it formal, be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Smith has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until November 15 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1642.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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No. 67

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**Legislative Assembly
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des débats
(Hansard)****Monday 15 November 2010****Lundi 15 novembre 2010**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersGreffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 15 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 15 novembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very happy to welcome to the House our new page, Alexandra Oleiche, and her mom and dad, Fida and Zein Oleiche, who are here today.

M. Phil McNeely: C'est avec grand plaisir que je souhaite la bienvenue à des représentants et représentantes de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. Dans la tribune nous retrouvons Carol Jolin et Richard Leblanc de ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans, et Julie Yelle et Joselin Accimé d'Ottawa.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to introduce family members of my legislative intern Tom Maidwell, who are visiting Toronto from Northumberland, in north east England. I'd like to introduce his mum, Debbie Maidwell; dad, Andrew Maidwell; gran, Margaret Maidwell; and grandpa, Alan Maidwell. They attended Tom's graduation at the University of Toronto last Friday. Congratulations to Tom, and welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais introduire les membres de l'AEFO qui sont ici aujourd'hui du comté de Timmins-Baie James : de la ville de Hearst, Paul Barile, qui est enseignant à Hearst, avec Michelle Côté, qui est ici aussi; de la ville de New Liskeard, Julie Goulet; et de Timmins, Angèle Souckey avec Anne Vinet-Roy. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today, in the Legislature, a delegation from an organization called Diabetes in Ontario Schools is here with us and will be in the House to hear question period: Ms. Shana Betz, Gabriella Simo, Yasmine Hooey, Preet Dhatt, Tim Kwiatkowski, Stephanie Winsor, Lauren Wallace, Kaitlyn Wallace, Robert Murakami, Jeanne McKane, Olivia Murakami, Ella Murakami, Lisa Winters-Murphy, Mary Anne St. Pierre, John Wallace, Michael St. Pierre, Michelle St. Pierre, Mandy Conlon, Ashley Conlon, Diana Mann, Robert Mann, Leanne Irwin, Samuel Irwin and Avery Irwin.

Of those, 15 are children with type 1 diabetes, and they're here to visit us today.

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis heureux aujourd'hui de vous présenter trois enseignants et enseignantes dans la

galerie ouest des membres : M^{me} Frédérique de Launière, enseignante à l'École secondaire catholique Nouvelle-Alliance à Barrie; M. Théophile Rwigimba, enseignant à l'école Patricia-Picknell à Oakville; et M. Jean-Gardy Dumoulin, enseignant à l'école publique L'Équinoxe à Pembroke.

L'hon. Leona Dombrowsky: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue ce matin aux représentants de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens—l'AEFO—qui participent à leur journée de lobbying à Queen's Park aujourd'hui.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Please welcome various officials from the Ministry of Education and educators from the Russian Federation, who are visiting Queen's Park today. They're accompanied by Ann Mollon, who lives in the great riding of Ottawa Centre.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Annually, Christina Blizzard, a renowned columnist for Sun Media, organizes a group that's headed by the Queen's alumni association to meet here at Queen's Park. They're all in the press gallery. They're accompanied today by the Queen's alumni staff officer, Ben Seewald.

I'll just list their names; they'll be meeting with all the various government officials today, and I'm sure that a good day will be had by one and all: Ayesha Shah, Kiefer Cheng, Taylor Huff, Lindsay Kline, Sacha Gudmundson, Jenny Yang, Priyanka Desai, Ayra Reyla, Erin Morawetz, Maki Ikushima, Caroline Garrod, Karicia Quiroz and Brenna Crosby.

I know you'll be hosting a reception for them later on, Speaker. I'd like to welcome them.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: In the press area today, we have the co-anchor of CTV News, Tony Ryma from Sudbury, and his son Nicholas from Sudbury. Welcome.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome Catherine Frei, a child and family advocate from my riding, as well as Shevaun and Steve Voisin, who are also from my riding and who are down to visit Queen's Park today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai de la visite aujourd'hui. J'aimerais vous présenter M. Conrad Mazerolle, qui vient de mon comté. Je suis bonne amie avec sa mère, Eva Mazerolle. Avec lui est M^{me} Chantal Noël de Sudbury, également de l'AEFO. J'aimerais leur souhaiter la bienvenue à Queen's Park.

I also want to welcome all of the parents, grandparents and children living with type 1 diabetes who have joined us at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the great pleasure to introduce to the House a wonderful group from Vietnam.

They are musicians and they're on a Canada tour. I had the great pleasure of seeing them and listening to them on the weekend, and I'm delighted they're here to visit us. They are: Linh Khanh, Ha Thu, Tho Quang, The Dan, Tu Anh, Anh Soang and Nhan Thahn.

Congratulations to them to visit Canada, and welcome to the Legislature.

1040

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would like to welcome teacher Adam McNiff and the grade 10 civics class from Oakridge Secondary School of London, who will be joining us at Queen's Park today.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'ai le plaisir de vous présenter trois personnes de ma région de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens : Marc Lepage de Casselman, François Boudrias de L'Orignal et Philippe St-Amant de Trenton. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome my brother Joe Peters to the Speaker's gallery. Welcome back, Joe.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, your economic experiments have gone badly off the rails, and now you appear to be scrambling. As you know, Premier, by law you are supposed to deliver the update on your economic plan by November 15, which is today. We've been given no notice that that is actually happening. So, Premier, did you miss the legislative deadline for your fall economic update because the news is that bad, because you have no plan whatsoever, or because your priority was handing out \$30 million in scholarships to foreign students for which Ontario families cannot apply? What is your priority, Premier, and why did you forget about the Ontario economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Earlier this morning, I filed a letter with the table. The fall statement will be this Thursday, and I look forward to hearing from the opposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier—and I'm sorry the Premier didn't respond to my question. It has been some time since I've had a chance to pose a question to the Premier, given his international travel. I hope he'll answer this one.

The Santa Claus parades are already happening. The legislative deadline was actually today, Premier, to put forward your plan. You appear to be scrambling—and then you announced this morning, on the day it is due, that now it is going to be Thursday.

One of the things in your last economic plan was an HST tax grab that you said would create 600,000 jobs. The evidence is in since you brought in your greedy HST

tax grab: Ontario families have seen 41,000 private sector jobs disappear since July 1. So, Premier, did today's deadline simply creep up on you, or do you have no clue whatsoever on how you can give Ontario families a break instead of hitting them with the HST tax grab?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The requirement to have the statement today was the result of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which this government brought in because the Leader of the Opposition and the government he was part of had their last budget at Magna. I'll also point out that that budget had a \$5-billion hidden deficit, which this government eliminated in its first two years.

The statement will be Thursday. I look forward to debating the Leader of the Opposition on that issue—on a range of issues—but I don't want to go back to a time when governments take statements and budgets out of the Legislature, and high hidden deficits.

It's about integrity in government. That rests on this side of the House, not on that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member from Simcoe North that the Speaker would like to hear both the questions and the answers.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, Minister, some act. If the deadline was today and then you scramble to put out some release that it's Thursday, teachers would give you a failing grade, if they're allowed to put grades on report cards anymore in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Let me ask the Premier this as well. Premier, since your last so-called economic plan, you've had six or seven arbitration decisions that have gone against your plan for a wage freeze in the public service. Obviously, your wage restraint plan has gone badly off the rails, and we're likely billions of dollars behind with that plan. Even the president of the Ontario Hospital Association has lost faith in you, saying, "The process has failed. What's the government's plan now?"

Premier, do you have no idea whatsoever how you're going to make good on your promise? Are you making it up on the fly, or will we actually see something in your update when it finally comes before the Legislature?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just in response, let me say a few things. Since the bottom of the recession in May 2009, 180,000 new jobs for Ontarians. As a result of our tax plan for jobs and growth, nine out of 10 Ontarians are paying less income tax now than they were before that plan.

There's no doubt that there are challenges in getting the budget back into balance, but I'll remind the member opposite: We rejected their approach. We don't want kids to lose 10 million days of school.

Let me talk to you about some of the positives. Almost half of the settlements that have been arrived at since the budget was tabled have arrived at zero and zero. The average settlement has come down; it's below the private sector average.

It's about moving forward in a positive direction for a better economy for all Ontarians, especially our—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order, member from Durham.

New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier—and the finance minister's answers, quite frankly, resemble a government that is making this up on the fly. You have not brought forward your plan today and, with due respect to the finance minister and his so-called job figures, quite frankly, I don't think creating jobs in Korea through your Samsung giveaway should count towards jobs. We want to see jobs here in the province of Ontario for Ontario families.

Let me get back to the Premier. While you were travelling, the Fraser Institute came back with a study that showed that you were the worst fiscal manager of all the Premiers in Confederation, dead last, because of your runaway spending, your tax increases and your lack of a plan to get the budget back into balance. So, Premier, I'll ask you a question that the finance minister did not answer. You've had six arbitration settlements that have ruled against your so-called wage freeze. Will your economic statement have a new plan, or have you given up altogether?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thought the Minister of Finance spoke to that at some length.

I always appreciate the observations and opinions offered by my colleague opposite, but I think that, from time to time, it's important to introduce some objective assessments of the state of the economy.

Just recently, the Royal Bank of Canada had this to offer: "Ontario's economy entered 2010 with renewed vigour, carrying its strongest momentum in almost six years.... This impressive start to 2010 implies greater strength overall this year than earlier believed ... which will be the fastest annual growth in 10 years in the province."

There's no doubt whatsoever that the global economy remains—the outlook remains uncertain. We have, to a very large extent, historically hitched our economic wagon to the wagon of the United States of America, but we're doing more things to lay a stronger foundation for growth, including modernizing our tax system and investing in new electricity systems. It would be nice to have the support of the member opposite when it comes to doing that important work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, the Premier's speaking notes and the so-called facts he cites are way past their best before date.

Quite frankly, Premier, you should know this number: Families have now seen 41,000 private sector jobs leave the province of Ontario since you brought in your greedy HST tax grab. Ontario families are paying more through your so-called smart meters, which are nothing more than

tax machines. Hydro bills are going through the roof. Ontario now has the highest tuition in all of Canada, and instead of providing relief to families of Ontario taxpayers, to their daughters and sons, you're giving away generous scholarships to foreign students at \$40,000 a year, to which Ontario students cannot apply. We would change that and put Ontario students first.

Premier, will there be some kind of relief for Ontario families in your economic statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I like to say, the facts are not unimportant, and here are a few facts. Since the depths of the recession, the American economy has recovered 10% of jobs lost. Here in Ontario so far, we've recovered 76% of jobs lost, and we have some specific plans in place to help create new jobs.

That includes our investments in clean, green, renewable energy: Solar Semiconductor, 200 jobs in Oakville; Canadian Solar, 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph; Silfab, 200 jobs in Mississauga; Solar Source, 200 jobs in Windsor; Siliken, 175 jobs in Windsor; JNE Consulting—I just announced this last week—300 jobs in Hamilton; Fronius, 100 jobs in Mississauga.

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The fact is, we are moving forward to create more jobs. Again, it would be nice to have the support of the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We could probably begin listing all the jobs that have been lost under Premier McGuinty from his high taxes and runaway hydro rates but, quite frankly, we'd probably be here all day and then some.

The Premier seems to think things are shipshape, that we're sailing along smoothly in our province. This shows how dramatically out of touch Premier McGuinty has become after seven years in office.

That's why families want to see a plan to provide them with some relief to spend on their priorities, not the priorities of Premier McGuinty. They want to see a spending restraint plan that will make sure we don't balance your spending today on the shoulders of our children and grandchildren in the future with the runaway deficits and debt under this government.

Premier, I don't want to think you're making this up on the fly. I want to think that you knew today was the deadline, so please tell me that Thursday's plan will address the real needs of Ontario families.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll just repeat the statement offered by the Minister of Finance: We look forward to introducing the fall economic statement. It's an important document and bill which we will be introducing inside this Legislature. It will follow hard on the plans that we already have in place, which my honourable colleague not only refuses to support but refuses to even acknowledge. Let me just give you one specific example.

We inherited an electricity system that was in a desperate state of disrepair. We could barely meet electricity demand needs in 2003. We were not going to go ahead and put in place temporary diesel generators, so we've

invested billions of dollars in new transmission, billions of dollars in new generation. We are in the process of shutting down coal-fired generation. We will not return to the day when our children had to suck in dirty coal-fired generation emissions. We're going to move forward with clean air, clean jobs and a reliable electricity system that will be there for our hospitals and our schools—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. With each passing day, it becomes clearer and clearer that this government's smart meter program is running well over budget. The government insists that the project is going to cost ratepayers about a billion dollars, but Hydro One documents suggest that they're spending that much for their portion alone, and they're only installing one fifth of the meters.

Will this government reveal the cost of the smart meter scheme today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Energy will have more to say on this momentarily, but I would ask my honourable colleague to accept a reality. It doesn't matter where you look around the world today; in every progressive jurisdiction where they have their eye on the ball when it comes to the growing demand for electricity and the potential exponential increase in that demand when it comes to plugging in electric cars in the future, they have in place smart meters. They're there for their businesses and they're there for their homes. They help us better manage our electricity uses. It's just part and parcel of a definition of a progressive jurisdiction, and they're embraced by our environmentalists, which surprises me all the more that my honourable colleague opposite is not standing with us when it comes to putting in place smart meters in Ontario homes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is money out of people's pockets. The cost of installing a smart meter in northern Ontario and other rural areas is up to 10 times greater than in urban areas. Hydro One customers will soon be paying \$4 a month just to cover the cost of installing a smart meter that's going to drive their bills up.

The government insists that this project is on budget. Why won't they reveal all of the costs that are related to the smart meter program today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't know what the leader of the third party is talking about, but the rollout of smart meters is on time, it's on budget, and it's going smoothly. The time-of-use initiatives are working in homes right across this province. There's still a lot more time-of-use to be rolled out, and that's going to take place over the course of the next 24 months.

This is what Toronto Hydro said: They've indicated their rollout has gone very smoothly. It's still early, but these are some of their observations: They've observed

that 9,000 time-of-use customers have seen a diminishment in costs—that indeed, overall, on average, the costs to consumers have gone down.

The bluster of the NDP is absolutely incorrect. They stand in fear of modernizing our energy infrastructure. We need to modernize our energy infrastructure, full stop; we need to get the job done. It takes a little bit of courage to do that. It's obvious the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government could clear this up right now. We've asked Ontario's auditor to look into this deal. He says that it's not up to him; he says that he has to be asked by the Premier.

Why won't this government, why won't this Premier, instruct the Auditor General to conduct a careful cost-benefit analysis of this very ill-conceived program?

Hon. Brad Duguid: My question is, why does the NDP insist on us falling so far behind other jurisdictions? Other jurisdictions around the world are also investing in smart meters: Sweden, Germany, the United Kingdom, Austria, Spain, France, Italy, New Zealand, Ireland, Malta, California, Texas, Maine, New York, Ohio, Virginia, and Florida. Why do you want Ontario to be behind them?

We're proud to have Ontarians out in front of the rest of the world. We are global leaders when it comes to modernizing our energy infrastructure. We are global leaders when it comes to attracting renewable energy investment, investment that the NDP no longer supports. We're building a strong, clean energy economy here in this province, and we'll do it with or without the support of the NDP.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier.

Families across Ontario are worried about smart meters costing them more. That's the reality here in Ontario. Shelly McCrae in Courtice writes, "I cannot believe how much our electricity bills have increased since we began using the so-called 'smart meter.' It is getting difficult to pay our \$300 to \$400 monthly bills."

When will the Premier finally tell Ontario families, like the McCraes, the total cost of his smart meter experiment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: You just have to look around the world and see what other jurisdictions are doing. They're trying to catch up to us because they know Ontario is onto a good thing. They know Ontario is out in front of the rest of the world. They know that we're global leaders in this area—that's something the NDP don't have: the courage. When you're in government you need to lead, and we're leading and the people of Ontario are leading the world in this area.

Let me just quote from the Tory government's smart meter implementation plan, which says the rollout will

play an important role in Great Britain's transition to a low-carbon economy: "They will help us meet some of the long-term challenges we face in ensuring ... an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply."

The rest of the world gets it. Why do the NDP fail to understand the importance of modernizing our energy infrastructure? Ontarians deserve a modern energy system. That's what we're trying to deliver. We're determined to do that with or without the support of the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of looking around the world, this government should look at the people of Ontario and start understanding their struggles for a change.

Joe Burns from Chatham writes this: "I had this new smart meter installed by Hydro One and just got our Hydro One bill. It went from \$180 to \$360." People like Mr. Burns deserve to know just how much this experiment is costing. Why won't the Premier give Ontario families the full story and release all smart meter cost details right now?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's exactly it: It's about time the leader of the third party started to tell the full story, because I can guarantee that if she passed that bill over to us, we could find exactly what that issue is all about.

Smart meters—time of use—do not cause bills to go up by that amount. The preliminary work done from Toronto Hydro—because they're still in the process of implementation—indicates that there is a modest decrease, on average, to the bills—not a huge decrease, a modest decrease; we're very straightforward about that. But it's going in the right direction. It's helping Ontarians shift their use off of peak time to non-peak time and it's bringing savings to the system.

The NDP don't understand the importance of that, but we do. We're going to continue to modernize our energy system. We're going to continue to give Ontarians the ability to shift their use from peak to non-peak times.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Linda Gerrie writes: "As soon as my smart meter was installed last summer, my bills doubled ... I am approaching 65 and will no longer be able to afford my hydro bills ... so what will I do?"

Like all Ontarians, Ms. Gerrie has every right to know just—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. My apologies for interrupting. I'd just ask the government side to please come to order. I'm finding it difficult to hear the honourable member ask her question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Like all Ontarians, Ms. Gerrie has every right to know just how much this government's smart meter experiment is costing. Why is the Premier

refusing to release the financial details of his not-so-smart-meter boondoggle?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's time for the NDP to start standing up for renewable energy. It's time for the NDP to start standing up for conservation. I remember a time when members from the NDP used to believe in that. Let me quote the critic for the environment when he said this: "Don't ignore the economic opportunities that are presented by conservation and renewable energy—not to mention the enormous costs if we do nothing." Right now that's the NDP policy—do nothing. We will not do nothing. We're going to move forward with Ontarians. We will modernize our energy infrastructure, we will modernize our meters, we will convert those old meters to smart meters, we will give Ontarians the opportunity to conserve, and we will build a stronger, more reliable and cleaner energy system as a result, even if it is over the opposition of the third party.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of the Environment: Ontario Electronic Stewardship has delayed the release of its report by seven months. Once they did release the report, Ontario families learned the bad news: They paid \$45 million in eco taxes for televisions and computers that were neither diverted nor recycled. The target for collecting electronics was missed by 59%. You only had 2% of the target for recycling electronics—only 2%, Minister. Why was your response to this abysmal performance merely to send a sternly worded memo?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I always find it interesting when the party opposite, which created the Waste Diversion Act, gives us lectures about how it should be applied. On this side of the House, we are keeping hazardous material out of our landfills. That's exactly why we have a plan to ensure that all Ontario residents, if you have waste electronics in your house, can take it back for free and are assured that it will not get into a landfill and that it will be safely reused or recycled. Reuse comes before recycling. I am happy we have a program that says if there are waste electronics and they can be reused by our community, that is better than recycling them.

I have said and have written Ontario Electronic Stewardship and told them—they have shared with me they've failed to meet their targets. We expect them to do so; and they have diverted in the first year some 17,000 tonnes of hazardous electronic waste and they've improved that by some 110% this year, but they need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, this is awkward—2%? I have a goat that could do a better job of recycling than that. Your program for electronics is similar to your eco tax scheme that you surprised Ontario families with the same day you brought out the HST. Just like that program, Ontario families pay, but you aren't meeting your own environmental targets. In fact, you missed the environmental targets even after you lowered them. Admit

it, Minister: This is just another greedy tax grab dressed up in green clothing. What's your plan, Minister, when you miss your targets next year? Will you send yet another tersely-worded memo, perhaps all in caps?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find it interesting that this industry-funded program that is run by industry misses their targets—an industry-funded program set up by your previous government—and somehow, it's our fault.

Here's what you need to know, because I know you're the Progressive Conservative environmental critic. There are three Rs: reduce, reuse and recycle—and reuse is better for the environment than recycle. So it is very important that waste electronics, if they can be reused by our community—it's far better that we do that than recycle.

I have told Ontario Electronic Stewardship that if they fail to meet their targets, their job is to make sure that they meet those targets. That's why I require them now to send me quarterly reports. I've also told them that they need to have a consumer on their board. That is something that your party, when you created the act, did not think was important.

On this side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On July 16, 2009, Bruce Katkin wrote to the minister asking why his ministry allows bar and restaurant owners to steal the tips of servers. On July 30 last year, Mr. Katkin got a response from a constituency assistant, asking for his address so that the minister could provide a response. On September 24 last year, Mr. Katkin asked when a response would be coming. On October 9 last year, he was informed that the ministry staff would be providing a response shortly. On Friday, following the Toronto Sun editorial, Mr. Katkin was finally contacted by the ministry; they wanted to know his address again.

Some 16 months have passed. Why won't this minister answer this constituent and the question?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. All correspondence that the Ministry of Labour receives is taken very seriously. If the member and his constituent have not gotten a response, I will take it upon myself to ensure that that response is provided to that constituent.

That being said, when it comes to employment standards in the province of Ontario, we have increased the number of resources by over \$10 million, we have added a significant number of employment standards officers and augmented the office in Sault Ste. Marie to be able to provide services to constituents, like the one who the member mentioned.

We take these issues very seriously. We want to ensure that all workers of Ontario get the information that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is all about the tip-outs. Bill 114 has received a groundswell of support from the public, the media, all Liberal MPPs and the many thousands of servers across this province. Every day, there is another radio show, newspaper column, editorial or TV show on this very topic. No one is opposed to this bill.

Mr. Katkin wanted to know what the minister would do about the extortion of money from restaurant servers. He has been patient, waiting 16 months for an answer. Will the minister commit to this House that he intends to call the bill in committee, give it third reading and ban this practice in the province of Ontario forever?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I first want thank the member for having introduced his bill and the debate that has taken place around this very important matter.

As I've said before, our hospitality industry and our tourism industry in the province of Ontario is one of our greatest economic drivers. The success of that industry depends on those servers, those bartenders, those hostesses, these chefs and other staff who work within that industry.

We, as a government, also understand that many in that industry have a base as a benchmark: the minimum wage. That's why our government since day one has increased the minimum wage year over year, to the point where, amongst all provinces, we have the highest minimum wage in Canada. We will continue to move forward with initiatives that help the hard-working men and women of Ontario.

I will ensure that the member gets—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. During the past week, we have been hearing a lot about the new Ontario Trillium international scholarship program. I've been watching in dismay as the official opposition postures that this new scholarship will take opportunity and funding away from Ontario students. I'm also surprised at the suggestion that scholarships for international students are somehow akin to sending money overseas, when it would actually be spent at our universities and in their communities.

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We know that students are concerned about tuition fees and how they will afford to pay for post-secondary education. You will recall that I asked you to address these concerns here less than two weeks ago. Minister, what is the McGuinty government doing to support Ontario students?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the honourable member's question, and I think it's important that we point out that it is important that we attract the best and the brightest to Ontario's universities, both from within Ontario and from around the world.

I'm very pleased that our government spends, every year, over half a billion dollars on grants and scholarships for Ontario students. At the same time, we are part of a global competition for the best and the brightest around the world, which is why the Trillium scholarships will help attract them here.

This is about jobs for Ontario. International students—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Nepean is interjecting so loudly that she doesn't even hear the Speaker cautioning her.

Please continue.

Hon. John Milloy: International students inject about \$1.5 billion into our economy, and studies show that about 80% of these best and brightest from around the world stay in Ontario and contribute to our economy.

The Trillium scholarship has been supported by every single student group—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Our universities are known throughout the world for the high quality of their education programs and the calibre of their graduates. Ontario universities attract students from around the globe to study medicine, business, science and other academic disciplines.

When these international students complete their studies, some become ambassadors for Ontario as they return home to other parts of the world. But, as the minister said, many wish to stay in Ontario after they graduate. They wish to contribute their skills, talents and education to what might become their new home. At the same time, Ontario needs these highly educated graduates to contribute to our prosperity and to meet labour demands.

Could the minister tell these aspiring Ontarians what the government is doing to retain more highly educated international students after they graduate from universities in Ontario?

Hon. John Milloy: To the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Attracting the best and brightest talent in the world is a priority of the McGuinty government, and we recognize that in an open Ontario, a highly skilled workforce is essential to ensure that our province remains strong and prosperous. That's why our government is taking action to ensure that when international students come to Ontario, they stay in this province when they graduate.

Our expanded provincial nominee program will make it even easier for international students to remain in Ontario after they have obtained an advanced degree from an Ontario university. International students, for example, who have earned a master's or a Ph.D. degree in Ontario no longer need an offer of employment to apply to be fast-tracked for permanent status.

These changes are part of our Open Ontario plan to build a stronger economy by creating opportunities for international students to contribute to Ontario.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Premier. It might be time for the Premier to ban McGuinty Liberals from using Twitter until they can stop themselves from making false statements.

On November 9, your press secretary, Jane Almeida, posted a message saying that the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance supports your choosing foreign students over homegrown talent. The student alliance says it does not.

Is the McGuinty Liberal campaign to confuse Ontario families not just about hiding the real cost of your expensive energy experiments, but about your scholarship scheme too?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm quite happy to quote from a release here from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, which "firmly believes in the need to expand international enrolment, as these students add to the diversity of perspectives and experiences in the classroom, enhance the broader cultural diversity on campus, and contribute significantly to ... economic prosperity...."

"With all that these students bring to our universities and to our province, the conversation should be about what we must do to provide the supportive learning experience" they need.

"Students agree that more needs to be done to improve the accessibility and affordability of higher education. OUSA has applauded recent improvements in financial assistance for domestic students and will continue to advocate for and support investment in all students."

I'm very proud to have the support of not only OUSA but the College Student Alliance and the Canadian Federation of Students, all of whom have expressed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The members will please come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He got out-tweeted on that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The only twits are over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Sarnia will withdraw the comment—no, stand and withdraw.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister of Community Safety.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad that standing up for Ontario students has got such a rise out of the government today.

Premier, last week you yourself posted a message on Twitter that said that your decision to hand \$40,000-a-year scholarships to foreign students was not about international students versus homegrown talent. We stand for Ontario students and families who say that it is. As an

example, one of my own kids, attending post-secondary education, was a Governor General's medalist, the best of the best, and she received no provincial scholarship.

The fall economic statement, whenever it comes, will confirm that Ontario has limited resources, but you choose to hand it to foreign students when Ontario's brightest and best receive nothing. How do you fall so far out of touch?

Hon. John Milloy: As I pointed out earlier, we invest over half a billion dollars in grants and scholarships for Ontario students. When that member was in power, when his party was in power, they cut student aid by 41%.

Let me share—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Leeds–Grenville knows the standing orders and that if he's not satisfied with the answer, which he can't hear as he is interjecting—I would encourage him to listen to the answer. If you're not satisfied, you can file for a late show.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to share another quote here: "I believe in my heart we have to do some of these things to invest in the province and to get the best and the brightest to come here.

"We need these big brains from all over the world to help fuel our economy, to come here to develop new ideas and do it here in Ontario. To help us launch the next RIM, BlackBerry-type idea here, to have those jobs here. They've been doing this for decades at Harvard."

The member may recognize that quote. It is from John Tory.

DIABETES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

This morning I had the great pleasure to meet with children who have type 1 diabetes, their parents and some of their grandparents as well. The proper management of diabetes is essential for ensuring the health of these children, but today, children in Ontario face a patchwork of services. There are no consistent policies for how diabetes is dealt with in our schools. Is the minister ready to adopt a health support services policy similar to what exists in New Brunswick, which would define the standards and the procedures required for the provision of health support services to students living with type 1 diabetes and attending our schools?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Kids who have been diagnosed with diabetes face real challenges, and I am so pleased that our government saw fit to actually fund insulin pumps for kids with diabetes. I have seen first-hand the difference that that innovation makes for our children. It means that they can participate like kids. It means that they can actually be kids when they are kids, and it's making a real difference for kids right across this province today.

Is there more to do? Absolutely. I'm very, very encouraged by the progress that we're making when it

comes to treating diabetes and preventing diabetes, and engaging schools in that is part of the solution.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The pumps don't mean too much to a four- or five-year-old who doesn't know the difference between 3.5 and 35 blood sugar. Somebody has to be there to help them. Right now in Ontario schools, some schools do some work, some do nothing and some, frankly, put barriers to the health of those kids.

Over the last 12 years, diabetes rates have doubled in Ontario, with one in 10 Ontarians now living with the disease, and the numbers keep rising. Study after study tells us that the social determinants of health—poverty being number one—are the best indicators of diabetes, yet the minister has failed to invest in prevention like she fails to provide the kids with type 1 diabetes with the support they need to attend school safely. Why is the minister refusing to implement the well-known best practice and failing to provide Ontarians, including 7,000 children living with diabetes, with the tools they need—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want you to know that I'm working closely with the Minister of Education to look at this issue, because we do know that kids dealing with diabetes are pretty special kids and they deserve special care. Our work on prevention, our work on getting kids moving in school, daily physical activity, other initiatives around healthy eating in the schools—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: After-school programs.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —after-school activities: We are taking important steps to improve the health of kids to prevent diabetes. But those children who have been diagnosed with diabetes do need special care, and as I say, I'm working closely with the Minister of Education to ensure that schools are a healthy place for kids with diabetes.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and small business. Ontario's 379,000 small and medium-sized businesses are the engine of Ontario's economy. Ninety-nine percent of all businesses in Ontario are either small or medium-sized. They employ nearly 2.9 million Ontarians and they account for \$250 billion in annual economic activity. That makes their success vital to the strength of Ontario's economy.

I've heard from a number of small businesses in my riding that obviously are pleased with the upswing in the economy, but they could still use some help. I ask the minister: What is this government doing to help the small and medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to receive this question from the member from Oakville, who is a strong small business supporter, a long-time supporter for the initiatives that our government has taken to help small business.

In addition to the 57 offices that we have across Ontario for the express purpose of helping new businesses get launched and grow those that exist and the 12 regional offices that do more of that, there have also been significant initiatives on the tax policy side, which we know businesses appreciate. For the first time we have seen a significant decrease in the small business corporate income tax that they pay—a 20% decrease—and a total elimination of the small business surtax. We're the first province in Canada to do this. We see a number of initiatives coming along to help in the change of our tax system: for example, a \$1,000 tax credit going out this week to thousands of businesses across Ontario. They will see that provincial business input cost reimbursed to them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the minister for her response. Obviously small and medium-sized businesses are some of the hardest-working Ontarians around. They are the backbone of our economy.

She outlined a number of very exciting tools that will provide much of the help that small and medium-sized businesses in my constituency are looking for. However, one of the concerns I hear most from my constituents wasn't addressed in the minister's answer. While many of my constituents would prefer to spend their time growing their business and serving their customers, many have told me that their ability to do so is constrained by the time and money it takes to get through all the paperwork and the red tape that's often associated with owning a business. Is this government doing something to reduce these burdens for our small and medium-sized businesses, and what exactly are they doing?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I know that the member from Oakville will be delighted to learn, as other members of the House are, that, as of last year, the Ministry of the Environment, for example, has totally eliminated their backlog for certificates of approval required by that ministry—a backlog which, frankly, existed previous to the last government. Those are significant inroads that we're making to turn the tables, to make it easier for businesses to do business with government. When they interact with us, we want it to be easy.

The best indicator of this is the passage of the Open for Business bill, which passed in this House just this month. We are now speaking to businesses so they can understand how those 100 amendments in that one piece of legislation will help them do business better, smoother, more streamlined and less costly, with more time for them to do the business that they want to do, which is to hire more people, make more product and give more service. That is what we're doing. The Open for Business bill is probably the best indicator of how we are moving forward to interact with businesses in Ontario and make it easier for them to do more business in this province.

ADOPTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, do you support the creation of permanency plans so families looking to adopt and crown wards waiting to find their forever family can move forward with the adoption process?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud to talk about the work that we are doing to find forever families for kids in Ontario. Since 2003, the number of adoptions under our government has grown by 62%. We know that there is a great deal more work to do, and we are working to find better outcomes and permanent homes for kids.

I had the opportunity to recently visit Kawartha-Haliburton CAS, and I'll give you some insight as to the range of activities that are being pursued to find permanency options for kids and families. They're looking at adoption, and they're doing very well on that front.

They're also looking at legal custody, which is a way to acknowledge kids who have relationships with their birth families but want that forever, permanent home. There, I met a mother who had adopted a number of kids, who had legal custody and who was fostering a number of kids, all of them finding a forever family in her home, but doing that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have another number for you: Only 8% of crown wards in Ontario have a permanency plan in place. That means 92% of Ontario child crown wards do not have the option of finding a forever family. These children do not have an opportunity to get adopted because they don't have a permanency plan, and there's no central agency in Ontario similar to the ones in place in British Columbia and in Alberta.

Minister, why are you allowing Ontario children to fall behind to the point where children have to depend on luck to get adopted?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It is quite something to hear this come from the other side of the House. Children in this province languished in a lost decade when that government was in charge, and they did nothing to find forever families for kids.

But if we're interested in numbers, let me give you some numbers: Last year alone, CASs worked to find permanent families for over 5,200 children in care; 3,800 were supported to live with kin, with their own families, with their extended family, and 170 with legal guardians; 1,000 aboriginal children were placed, as is their custom, with their relatives to care for them; and 1,000 kids were placed for adoption, an increase of 21% over the year before.

We take the expert panel's recommendations very seriously. We're working with the commission to promote sustainability, and this year in the funding formula—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. We're learning today that Metrolinx is preparing to enter into a sole-sourced agreement to purchase Japanese diesel trains to run along Toronto's Union-Pearson air-rail link.

Why is the McGuinty government allowing Metrolinx to proceed without any Canadian content requirements whatsoever for these trains and before the completion of a \$4-million electrification study?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's a pleasure to confirm the reality that Metrolinx's procurement process is not complete; they're in the process of undergoing that negotiation. They are having a board meeting tomorrow, and they'll be completing those negotiations and talking to their board members about it. I'm not going to speculate on what Metrolinx is or is not going to do.

The point I want to make is that we're building an air-rail link. We're going to have a premium train service from Pearson airport to Union Station. I would expect that the New Democratic Party would actually be supportive of that. I would expect that the NDP would be supportive of more public transit, that they would understand that in order for Toronto to be a world-class city, we need to have that air-rail link, but apparently they are not supportive.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No matter how you look at it, this train purchase makes no sense whatsoever. Without Canadian content requirements, there will be no jobs created here in Ontario. Emissions from dirty diesel trains will be greater than those emissions that are currently coming from cars that they will take off the roads. The trains will require a costly overhaul, eventually, to become compatible with future electrification of the line.

The Metrolinx board does meet tomorrow, as the minister already has said, and they're going to be receiving an update on that air-rail link. My question to the Premier and the minister is, will the McGuinty government immediately instruct the board to slam the brakes on this foolish, foolish train proposal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, we're not going to stop building the air-rail link from Pearson to Union. I think that would be a very, very bad idea. Where there are procurement and Canadian content rules, obviously, those will be followed.

The point is, we are talking about convertible cars; we are talking about cars that will run with the highest quality diesel and will be convertible to electric. That's a reality that the member opposite consistently forgets to mention.

We are going to build this air-rail link; we are going to provide a service that will allow people to go quickly and efficiently from Pearson to Union Station. That is absolutely in the best interest of this city and the economic development of the GTHA.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, parents in my riding of London-Fanshawe are very interested in what their children are doing at school, but, just as important, they want to make sure that students are in a safe environment. Bullying is a problem that happens everywhere, and parents want to know what we as a government are doing to make sure that our schools are safe in the province of Ontario.

Minister, as this is Bullying Prevention and Awareness Week, can you tell me what you're doing, as the Minister of Education and also as a government, to make sure we have a positive environment in our schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm really happy that the honourable member has reminded the people in this assembly that it is Bullying Prevention and Awareness Week. Certainly, we want to thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo again for all of her efforts in bringing this forward.

With respect to bullying in schools, we do recognize that we have a very important responsibility to do all that we can to comfort parents and have them understand that when their kids go to school, they are safe. That is why we have put in place a safe schools strategy. The purpose of this strategy is to enable school communities to focus on prevention. We know that when they put that effort up front, when they talk about prevention strategies before the bullying occurs, that can be most effective.

I had the opportunity this morning to be in a school where the students are absolutely excited about this initiative. It's sweeping across—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister, for sharing this information about the important steps that the government has taken towards keeping our schools safe. Bullying is indeed a very serious problem, and I'm pleased to hear that this government is acting swiftly on it.

Parents want to be involved with their children, whether inside the school or on the playground. Can you tell us, Minister, what kinds of steps you are taking to make sure to involve the parents in the safety environment in the schools?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Again, because this has been such an important issue and we have listened to parents, that is why we did introduce the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, which came into effect in February of this year.

This act requires that for all school board employees—not just teachers, but any board employee—who would witness an act of bullying or have an act of bullying reported to them, that must be reported directly to the principal. It also requires the principal to follow through on that report, and that the victim's parents be notified in the event that there has been this type of unfortunate situation occur at a school. We believe this is very, very important information. Parents deserve to have it.

We've also provided training for the staff, because we're saying now that it goes beyond teachers; it goes to all staff in a school. We have provided training for all staff to make our schools safer places—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Many of my constituents have been asking me questions about the government's time-of-use energy billing. They are wondering why, while they will be working diligently to conserve energy, they will be paying more due to this government's flawed smart meter time-of-use billing system.

Why is this government penalizing Ontario families and seniors for doing their part to conserve energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think those very same constituents should be asking the member opposite why her leader wants to jack up the cost of time-of-use by imposing a duplicate system of billing that's going to impose huge administration costs on local distribution companies. If they really cared about the cost of time-of-use, they wouldn't be coming forward with the unthought-out ideas that the Leader of the Opposition has come forward with. We've looked at their ideas, and there's no question: Their ideas would jack up the cost of time-of-use.

It's time for that party and that leader to recognize the facts. The fact is, time-of-use, on average, is bringing bills down so far. It's early in the implementation, but all data suggest that, on average, costs are coming down for consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's clear to me that on that side of the House, the left hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing.

The reality is that Ontario families are doing their part; it's this government that isn't. This government is particularly penalizing those who are at home during the day, such as seniors and parents with small children. It's ludicrous that this government believes that our seniors should be waiting until 9 p.m. to do their laundry or run their air conditioner.

Why doesn't this government listen to Ontario families and seniors, who are expressing hardships, and stop using this one-size-fits-all practice?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let's cut through the political rhetoric and go to somebody who's an expert on these issues; that would be our Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller. This is what he had to say about your proposal: "It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity, or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted." Time-of-use "is about saving future costs for Ontarians.... By reducing peak demand (which should come about through customers' response to time-of-use prices), we avoid having to build more" expensive "power plants and transmission lines."

Listen to this; this is also what he says, and the member opposite should get this as well: "Going back to the same-old-same-old that did not work is not the answer."

We need to modernize our energy system. We will modernize our energy system.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Who said that?

Hon. Brad Duguid: That quote came from Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of the province of Ontario.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, earlier this year, families were evacuated from their homes in Attawapiskat due to a major sewer backup. As a temporary measure, the Department of Indian Affairs installed a temporary trailer complex, similar to what you would find at a construction site for workers at a remote site such as De Beers or any other site. These construction trailers are made up of about 90 rooms.

In these 90 rooms, we have 90 families, many of them with small children. What is really appalling is that, not only are the conditions not safe when it comes to the safety of the children, but we're finding that there is not even a fire alarm system that works in those particular trailers. There are standards in this province, and that would not be allowed anywhere else—at a construction site or in a town somewhere—in Ontario.

What are you prepared to do to make sure that these kids are protected according to the rules here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's absolutely essential that wherever our children happen to be, they receive the protection that they need. I think the member has raised a very important issue.

He does correctly say and suggest that matters which pertain to First Nations are the constitutional and, I would say, other responsibility of the federal government. I think the first thing that we're going to be doing is checking up and finding out what the federal government has done to investigate this particular issue.

I suspect my friend has already raised it with the federal government, a very important issue. I suspect he has, and I want to work with him to find out what the answer is; I want to find out what the answer is. Otherwise, it's an important issue. We must make sure that children are protected wherever they happen to be.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to remind you, Minister, that Ontario signed Treaty 9. I also want to remind you that these are citizens of the province of Ontario. I want to remind you that the federal government is missing in action. One only needs to go onto a reserve anywhere in this province, specifically in the Far North, to find out the deplorable situation that First Nations find themselves in because of a federal government that doesn't care, that has never been there and is not about to change anything.

So my question is to you: What is the province of Ontario prepared to do, as a signatory of Treaty 9, to ensure that these kids are safe and that we start making life better for them?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We comply with our treaty obligations, but as my friend will know, as we work hard to make sure that First Nations, whether they're on- or off-reserve, have economic opportunities, as we improve their health, as we improve the child welfare approach in this province, we cannot, as a people, make up for a federal government that does not fulfill its constitutional responsibility. If we assume all the responsibility—my friend will know this—all that we're doing is keeping people at the same level they are today instead of building.

We need to make the improvements that we're making and get the federal government to live up to its constitutional treaty and moral responsibility, consistent with the UN declaration that they said that they were adopting just this past week, finally.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In my riding of Richmond Hill, the prevalence of violence is gaining more exposure in the media and is causing concern among my constituents. Gang violence has been negatively affecting Ontario for several decades. Both gangs and guns are a threat to the safety of our communities in Ontario.

I know that keeping Ontarians safe is a priority for this government. Can the minister tell my constituents how this government is working to fight crime in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's an excellent question. You will know that during Crime Prevention Week, we announced our continued support for the safe and vital communities program, for instance. The program was launched by the government in 2004 to help community partners reduce crime in their own neighbourhoods. It is open to community-based, not-for-profit organizations, First Nations Chiefs and band councils, with the support of local police. This year, we are providing 44 crime prevention projects right across the province.

Since 2004, our government has helped community agencies and chiefs and band councils to carry out 195 projects across Ontario. We happen to believe that fighting crime should be a multi-faceted approach, and it's essential to proactively work with our youth to demonstrate the positive and constructive ways to stop violence. We need to work with our teachers, our police, our parents and our constituents to create the kind of safer Ontario that the member seeks.

VISITORS

VISITEURS

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome to the assembly today

the 385 Madoc army cadets from my riding in Prince Edward-Hastings. They just arrived. There are 50 here today with their leader, Tom Simpson.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Is it a point of order to recognize that on Friday evening, there was a fundraiser in support of those who have undergone organ donation, and there was a race pulling a sulky and the Speaker of this Legislature was victorious in that race? Is that a point of order?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a point of order, but it was for a good cause. It was for a very good cause. Make sure, if you have not signed your organ donor card, to sign your organ donor card. It was a great night.

I think we should point out that the Attorney General came in last in that race, I think.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, avec votre permission, j'aimerais vous présenter Benoit Mercier, qui est le président de l'AEFO de l'Ontario. Merci d'être ici.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches-East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour, concerning the practice of tip-outs. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Happy birthday as well today to our good friend David Caplan, the member from Don Valley East.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Norm Miller: Across Ontario, many high school students are anxiously awaiting their mid-term reports. Similarly, Ontarians have been waiting to see the government's mid-term report in the form of the fall economic outlook and fiscal review, as required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. The outlook was to be released on or before November 15. That's today.

I note that Mr. Duncan filed a letter with the Legislative Assembly indicating that the delay was to incorporate the latest StatsCan provincial economic accounts and labour force survey. Those reports were released November 4 and 5 respectively; that's 10 days ago. I'm trying to envision the circumstances under which any in-

formation contained in those reports would have required an entire rewrite of the fall economic outlook.

The whole situation is a little like a teacher setting a deadline for an assignment and the student failing to produce the homework. Unfortunately, the McGuinty government must score an F for failing to produce the report.

This is not the first time that the McGuinty government has received a failing grade. They've repeatedly failed Ontarians with their tax-and-spend ways, the introduction of the harmonized sales tax, the eco tax and increases in hydro costs, to name only a few.

Most recently, Premier McGuinty received a failing grade as the worst Premier in the country. Clearly, it's time for a change.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind our guests that we certainly welcome your presence here in the Legislature. As much as you may want to participate, you have to be elected; and you'll have that chance next October. You just have to sit back and, even if you don't like something you hear, you have to sit on your hands.

WALK FOR MEMORIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Every five minutes that go by, one person is being diagnosed with Alzheimer's in Canada. Every decade that passes, the costs associated with Alzheimer's disease double.

On Sunday, October 24, I had the honour of attending Bloomington Cove's Walk for Memories, a fundraising event hosted by Bloomington Cove, which is a long-term-care facility in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. The walk also served as a kick-off event to Long-Term Care Week, which is sponsored by the Ontario Long Term Care Association. The proceeds of this event went towards programs and services that support individuals and families who are coping with Alzheimer's disease.

The walk was a wonderful success. We were joined by families and friends of individuals with Alzheimer's and strolled Main Street in Stouffville, a particularly historic and scenic route in my riding.

I would like to give my thanks and congratulations to everyone who donated their time and money to this worthy cause. I would like especially to recognize the efforts of Janet Iwaszczenko, administrator of the Bloomington Cove long-term-care facility, who has given so much of her time and effort to make this event a reality.

I'd also like to thank Lois Cormack, the president of the board of directors of the Ontario Long Term Care Association and of specialty care, who also attended, for her leadership in this important health care sector, who is such a strong advocate for individuals with Alzheimer's and their families.

NATIONAL ADDICTION AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize National Addiction Awareness Week. This year's

theme is Celebrating Healthy Choices, as it promotes addiction-free lifestyles for individuals, families and communities.

As a member of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, I had the opportunity to not only learn about addictions from front-line health care and support organizations, but to hear how addiction issues impact individuals and their families. We learned from parents who slept by their front door to prevent their son from slipping out to buy more drugs. We learned from First Nations communities who struggle to treat a large percentage of the population's addiction to alcohol and prescription drugs. We learned from those with both mental health and addiction issues, also known as concurrent disorders, who are told they have to first deal with their addiction before they can get mental health treatment.

It was from listening and learning from these individual experiences with mental health and addictions within the system that the committee came to a consensus on 23 recommendations that would get Ontarians with mental health and addictions issues the help they need.

Many suffering from mental health and addictions issues suffer in silence. I stand here today as we recognize National Addiction Awareness Week and continue to advocate for the adoption of all 23 recommendations from the select committee's report, so those suffering in silence can finally be heard.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In a few minutes, I will be introducing a private member's bill. This bill will expand the mandate of the Ombudsman to include organizations delivering crucial public service to our most vulnerable Ontarians: hospitals, long-term-care facilities, retirement homes, school boards and children's aid societies.

Parents, children, patients and the elderly have nowhere to turn when the system fails them. They need help. This government needs to let the Ombudsman in.

I would like to take a few moments to thank everyone in the gallery who has come here today to support this bill. This is an important issue to many. We have guests here today from Courtland, London, Sudbury, Waterloo—from all over the province. We have representatives from ImPatient For Change; Protecting the Children; Voices of Innocent Families in Ontario; Canadian Maltese Charitable Service Trust; Canada Court Watch; Child and Families Advocating for Accountability; Fix CAS; After Foster Care, the Foster Care Council of Canada; Protecting Canadian Children; and Protecting the Innocent. The individuals who are here I wanted to name and to thank: Gina Konjarski, Lillian Forkohoule, Andrew Skinner, Michelle Lafantasie, Neil Haskett, Brian Caldwell, Lori Meadows, Elliott Frankl, Cybele Sack, Chris Carter, Mickey O'Reilly and Heather Freeborn.

I hope I haven't forgotten some, but I'm sure I have. I want to thank you for coming today.

COUNCIL ON AGING OF OTTAWA

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a great organization in my community and offer a special recognition of their 35 years of service for our seniors.

The Council on Aging of Ottawa is a bilingual, non-profit voluntary organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all seniors in Ottawa by working directly with seniors, their extended families, public and private care providers, service agencies and the government. The council receives support from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the city of Ottawa and the United Way Centraide Ottawa for this important work.

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This work can be summed up in five categories of action: to investigate through work groups, research consultations and partnerships; to communicate important information on issues and services to seniors and the broader community; to educate the community, agencies and policy-makers through workshops, publications and dialogue; to coordinate with other organizations and agencies for better outcomes for seniors; and to activate, by using all of these tools to advocate with policy and planning bodies, service agencies and community members, inspiring action for the well-being of seniors.

The council has addressed many important issues in this way, such as elder abuse, healthy lifestyles, seniors' benefits, hospital discharge planning, daycare and community services, friendly visiting, self-advocacy, living at home, and peer counselling.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the president of the Council on Aging, Dr. Lise Chislett, and vice-presidents Kathy Yach and Dr. Hugh Armstrong. Congratulations on your service to the seniors in Ottawa.

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. John O'Toole: November is a time of reflection and remembrance of those who have served our country in conflicts, past and present, around the world. Their sacrifices mean we can stand in this very chamber and speak freely of events.

As we remember those who have fallen, let us not forget those who continue to serve our country overseas in Afghanistan and beyond. They need our support, and that is why I'm pleased to honour the Rose of Durham volunteers who recently held their Coffee to Kandahar Tea, which raises money to purchase Tim Hortons gift cards for our troops serving overseas.

I'd like to commend Evelyn Murphy, the Rose team leader; Mary Taylor, a dedicated volunteer; and Lieutenant Colonel John Conrad, who accepted their gift on behalf of our soldiers overseas. These volunteers ensure that our troops receive the comfort and support from home that they deserve.

We must never forget, and we must remember to support, those who continue to stand on guard for us. All of us, I'm sure, thank the volunteers in our Legions and

our auxiliaries. Especially, I'd like to thank the Rose volunteers.

EVENTS IN TIMISKAMING-COCHRANE

Mr. David Ramsay: I'd like to update members of the House on a couple of very exciting projects that are having a good impact on my riding. One that I've talked about before is the redevelopment of the old gold workings west of Matachewan, in the Kirkland Lake Gold break area. There are now 100 workers on site there. A raise borer machine is there now, starting the pilot holes of the new shaft, and that is very exciting. Of the 100 workers that are on site, 25 to 30 come from the Matachewan First Nation, so it's a good example of a company like Northgate Minerals working very well with its neighbours.

Further north is a mine, north of my riding, in Detour Lake that is having an impact on the town of Cochrane. There are going to be several offices and related buildings that are going to be situated in Cochrane. That's going to bring high-quality employment and highly educated people into the area, which is going to be very good for that community.

In both areas, I'm working with the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, because the sweet headache there is, how are we going to accommodate all the workers in these towns? We're going to have to find ways to assist these communities that have been struggling over the years—these single-industry towns—to redevelop themselves. It's a nice challenge to have, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on making that happen.

REGIONAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION ASSOCIATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: On October 29, I had the pleasure of announcing \$237,000 of funding from the northern Ontario heritage fund toward a great cause. The Regional Food Distribution Association and their chair, Larry Brigham, have been working tirelessly for some time to achieve their goal of enhanced storage facilities to serve their clients in a region stretching from Marathon in the east to Kakabeka and Dryden in the west.

The newly named Paterson Family Food Centre will also accommodate a commercial kitchen and training facility for food handling and preparation, creating five to 10 jobs in the process. The renovation of a 15,000-square-foot building on Syndicate Avenue could not have been done without great partnerships and the strong support of community groups and organizations.

In addition to our government's funding, other contributors include the Paterson Foundation, the Fort William Rotary Club, the city of Thunder Bay and the municipalities of Greenstone, Marathon, Dryden, Nipigon, Neebing and O'Connor. Donations from the public, from church groups and from corporations have also helped the RFDA's efforts.

Additionally, I would like to thank the entire board of the RFDA: the chair, Larry Brigham; vice-chair, Kelly Hicks; treasurer, Eileen Pelletier; secretary, Cathy Oleschuck; Rolland Manning; Peter Doig; Keith Bunn; June Gaw; Yvonne Romas; Marcelle Paulin; Michael Gallagher; and Laren Beach.

I want to personally thank all volunteers, past and present, who have contributed so much time and energy to this project. Their effort has enhanced the ability of the RFDA to better serve those in need in our communities. Where would our communities be without the contributions of our volunteers?

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I want to shed some light on a shocking statistic: One in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. Having been one of those surviving this cancer has not only made me far more proactive about my own health, but more involved in raising awareness and understanding of men's health issues in general.

It was with this awakened sense of purpose that I decided to participate in Movember, a global health movement seeking to raise awareness and funds for the number one cancer affecting men, prostate cancer. The idea of Movember was sparked in 2003 in Melbourne, Australia, and has since expanded to countries around the world. Participants start Movember clean-shaven and then grow a moustache for the entire month to symbolize a collective effort to change the face of men's health. Some \$7.8 million has been raised in Canada, and that money goes to research, screening, treatment options and support services.

After 37 years, I decided to come completely clean. It's growing back, so I'm getting there. As I champion this cause by leading my own Movember team, McMeekin's Moustaches, I challenge my honourable colleagues to lead their respective communities in this great fight and to join together in the Movember effort.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (DESIGNATED PUBLIC BODIES), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (ORGANISMES PUBLICS DÉSIGNÉS)

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act to give the Ombudsman power to investigate designated public bodies / *Projet de loi 131, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman pour donner à l'ombudsman le pouvoir d'enquêter sur les organismes publics désignés.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The bill amends the Ombudsman Act to give power to the Ombudsman to do anything it may do under the act, in respect of a governmental organization, in respect of a hospital, long-term-care home, school board, children's aid society or retirement home.

UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY AND NATIONAL CHILD DAY

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DE L'ENFANCE ET JOURNÉE NATIONALE DE L'ENFANT

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on Universal Children's Day and National Child Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It's a privilege to rise today to mark the United Nations' Universal Children's Day and Canada's National Child Day, which is this Saturday, November 20.

C'est un privilège pour moi que de prendre la parole aujourd'hui afin de célébrer la Journée mondiale de l'enfance des Nations Unies et la Journée nationale de l'enfant au Canada, qui se dérouleront ce samedi 20 novembre.

For the past half-century, this day has been dedicated to celebrating childhood and promoting the welfare of kids around the world. In Canada, we've been celebrating National Child Day since the early 1990s. It is a reminder that it is our duty as citizens to protect the basic human rights of all kids in our country year-round. It is also an opportunity to recognize how children enrich our lives through their curiosity, their innocence, their thirst for knowledge and their resilience.

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Earlier today, I had the pleasure to meet and talk with some very inspiring young people at a lunch hosted by the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. As always, in my meetings with young people across this province, I was struck by their enthusiasm and their desire to contribute to the social good.

Our children represent our strength of purpose and the promise of the future. It is our shared responsibility to respect their rights, whether it is to be heard, to be protected or to be provided with opportunities to reach their full potential. This government takes their rights and their needs seriously.

Les enfants sont le reflet de notre forte détermination en même temps que la promesse d'avenir.

Our young people are the leaders and architects of tomorrow. We need to hear from them and we need them to help us make a better Ontario. That is why we're

working with youth to develop a plan called the youth policy framework. This plan will help us better understand how young people grow and develop and what they need to succeed along the way.

I'm particularly excited that we are moving forward with this plan in this, the United Nations International Year of Youth, and its timely theme of generating much-needed dialogue and mutual understanding with youth. Around the globe, individuals and governments are reaching out to youth to help them tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities that will help to make our world a better place.

This government is working hard to provide the opportunities and supports needed to help all of our young people thrive and succeed, especially our most vulnerable. This year marks the second year of our poverty reduction strategy—our province's plan to lift 90,000 kids and their families out of poverty in five years. Our plan includes programs like the Ontario child benefit, which is helping low-income families provide for their kids; it includes our student nutrition program, which is helping more than half a million kids across the province start their school day with a healthy breakfast or snack; it includes Healthy Smiles Ontario, our new program that will allow 130,000 kids to get regular dental checkups in their communities free of charge; and it includes our summer jobs for youth program, which gives at-risk youth valuable work experience that will contribute to their communities and build a strong workforce for Ontario—and we funded 4,700 jobs for youth this summer.

This government cares about our children's education. In September, we introduced full-day kindergarten for 35,000 four- and five-year-olds in 600 Ontario schools. Full-day learning gives kids a stronger foundation for success throughout all of their school years. We have increased accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education and created thousands of new spaces in colleges, universities and apprenticeships.

Our accomplishments are many, but there is still much to do. Today is a day to celebrate kids who are succeeding but also to remember and recognize kids who are struggling. Today is a day to reaffirm our commitment to continue our good work for kids across Ontario to ensure that they are treated as equals, listened to, respected, protected and supported in all that they do.

I urge all members of this assembly to reflect on how we can better serve and help children and youth in Ontario together, because, in the words of former South African president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Nelson Mandela, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."

Please join me in celebrating National Child Day by recognizing our collective role in supporting and nurturing Ontario's children and youth today to help ensure a better tomorrow for all Ontarians.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: On behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus, I'm pleased to rise today to acknowledge National Child Day.

I'd first like to thank all the young people who joined us today at the luncheon hosted in the Speaker's dining room and encourage them to continue to raise awareness for children's rights. I was struck by one of the speakers, who said, "We look up to MPPs as leaders, and we hope that, with sharing our stories today, you will listen." Rest assured that I heard the stories; I heard the challenges. Quite frankly, it brings it closer to home, as we review government policies and new legislation, that we have to keep in mind what actually happens on the ground.

I was fortunate to participate in a similar celebration last year on the 20th anniversary of the Universal Children's Day. We can all talk about the enormous strides that have been made to protect children from exploitation and harm, but we also have to be very aware that there are still children in need, children reaching out for services. We need to be aware of that as legislators as we review policies and procedures and as we look at children's aid societies across Ontario that are struggling, that are reaching out to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, saying that they cannot provide the services that they are legislatively obliged to provide without additional funding. We need to be cognizant of that as we review our policies and our economic situation in Ontario.

It is reprehensible to me, quite frankly, that children are on waiting lists for mental health services. We would never allow it if they had diabetes or another illness, and yet with mental health and addictions issues somehow it has become acceptable to say, "Your child can wait. Your child needs to wait and that's okay." I don't think that's okay. I think we can do a much better job here in ensuring that the services are being provided on the ground, and we should be constantly vigilant that our most vulnerable people and people who, quite frankly don't have the ability to have a voice in this chamber get to be heard.

It was a pleasure to join the youth ambassadors today at the lunch. I hope you continue speaking out and advocating, because it's an important role that you play. We will continue to listen and try to react and respond.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to be here to speak on behalf of New Democrats, because we are very proud to speak in favour of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We know that today in the provincial Legislature, in your own space, Speaker—and I want to thank you for that—there was an opportunity to have a luncheon with the independent child advocate, staff from his office, as well as some of the young people themselves. It was a very lovely opportunity.

The provincial child advocate, their staff, and in fact all of the agencies and international groups that serve children and youth, and the young people themselves, need to be commended for focusing on a goal that we all share, which is meeting the needs of the children and always working in the best interests of the child.

Members will recall that last year was the 20th anniversary of the November 20, 1989, declaration. The

Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. It was developed to ensure that the world recognized that children have human rights too.

The convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two optional protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the convention are non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education, and legal, civil and social services.

By ratifying the agreement, Canada and its provinces and territories have agreed to hold themselves accountable for this commitment before the international community to develop and undertake all actions and policies in light of the best interests of the child. UNICEF, the well-respected children's arm of the United Nations, is guided in its work by the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Built on varied legal systems and cultural traditions, the convention is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. They are founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability, and therefore apply to every human being, everywhere. These standards are both independent and indivisible. We cannot ensure some rights without or at the expense of other rights.

In Ontario, as privileged a jurisdiction as it is, there is much more work to be done. There continue to be children and youth in this province who do not have equal rights to an education—we heard about that in question period today—to health care, to good nutrition and to child care. I think in particular of the children with mental health challenges and other special needs such as autism, where waiting lists for treatment are far too great and families not adequately supported. I hear from these families virtually every day as the critic.

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Unfortunately, hunger and poverty continue to hamper the quality of life and potential for children and their families as well. In the greater Toronto area alone, 1,187,000 people turned to food banks to eat in 2010; 34% were 18 years of age or younger; 15% of children go hungry at least once a week according to the most recent profile from the Daily Bread Food Bank on who's hungry.

As legislators, we need to listen—really listen—to what we hear on the ground in our communities and work together to fill the gaps and improve services. Early intervention is the most cost-effective strategy for ad-

ressing many of these concerns. One in five children suffers from some form of mental illness, but of that one in five, only one in five will ever get help. The second-leading cause of death among children and youth after accidents is suicide. In Ontario, two children commit suicide every single week, and young people suffering from eating disorders have a mortality rate of 10%—and some say that's a conservative figure. Mental illness takes the life of more children than cancer does, yet services to deal with these children's mental health issues remain far from adequate. Building a responsive system is incumbent upon all of us.

I very much enjoyed speaking to the young people today and hearing what their thoughtful words were to guide us in our decision-making. Their input informs us and inspires us to stay on track, supporting their best hopes for the future and ensuring that our decisions are made in the best interests of the child. We heard from a young woman who talked about the sense of not having her voice heard in her own family, the sense of feeling invisible. She told us at the luncheon that when you feel invisible, you tend to do things to hurt yourself or to hurt others, and that's how she responded to her situation at home. We heard another young man who had a learning disability. In fact, we heard from a young man who was on the autism spectrum, and he told us about his difficulty in getting a proper assessment, and then after he got proper assessment, getting the proper supports to be able to meet his potential in educational institutions in this province. Of course, we also heard from another young man who said that even though he had been in the system, in care, all his life, he, in many ways, felt privileged because he knew that there were other children who didn't have as much as he had, and that, in some ways, made him feel a little bit guilty.

Those young people who come here every year and who you have hosted on occasion have a lesson for all of us, which is: If we don't pay attention to what they say, we really are not creating the kind of future that we can all be proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to join me in welcoming the youth who are visiting from across the province today, in the west gallery. This is as part, as we've heard, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and National Child Day. It's a real pleasure to have you here. I hope you've enjoyed your opportunity to visit Queen's Park today.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is from an individual from Guelph, actually.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and then-Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support this petition, and I'm pleased to affix my name to it and to give it to page Connor to take to the table.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise with pleasure to read this petition. It's a petition to grant the Ombudsman oversight of children's aid services. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

This was gathered by Anna Tessier of Iroquois Falls, and I've signed the petition.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: This petition was brought to me courtesy of members of OCAP, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. I had the privilege of meeting with about 25 protestors in my office on Friday. This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the members of your community, are disgusted by the decision of your government on March 25 in the 2010 provincial budget to scrap the special diet allowance;

"Whereas the special diet is money that people on welfare (OW) and disability (ODSP) rely on in order to buy healthy food and make ends meet. For years, people have been forced to choose between two essential needs, housing and food, as a direct result of inadequate OW and ODSP rates;

"Whereas, on March 25, 2010, this government put forth the most anti-poor budget since Harris in 1995. In cutting the special diet, you have chosen to be only the third government in Ontario's history to cut social assistance. This is a brutal move that will make hundreds of thousands of people hungry, sick, at risk of being evicted or homeless;

"Whereas, in 1995, the Tory government cut welfare by 22% and froze disability rates. Today, that cut in income is equivalent to approximately 55% with inflation and the cost-of-living increase for the last 15 years. The Liberal government campaigned against the Tories on a platform of poverty reduction and reversing the Harris cuts. But since 2003, little has been done to account for inflation, let alone reverse the Harris cuts, and in fact, people on social assistance today are worse off than they were in 1995. This is shameful.

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Parliament bring back the special diet allowance immediately and that you finally reverse the 1995 Harris cuts by raising OW and ODSP rates to where people can live with health and dignity."

I send this to you via page Joshua.

VETERANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, gathered primarily by Wilma McNeill from Sarnia-Lambton.

"Whereas with turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II; and

"Whereas we also remember and honour our present-day veterans and all who have paid the ultimate price fighting for the freedoms we enjoy in this great nation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government declare November 11 a provincial holiday to honour our veterans of past and present; as well as all the soldiers of today who currently fight to defend our freedoms."

I will send that down with William.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jake to take it to the Clerk.

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BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

VETERANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"It has often been said: 'If we don't remember the past, we are doomed to repeat it.' With turmoil and fighting around the globe, what better time to remember the price our veterans paid for freedom than the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II?

"We must not forget our Canadian men and women who have made the supreme sacrifice in Afghanistan.

"I urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to declare November 11, Remembrance Day, a statutory holiday in Ontario; lest we forget."

I'd just like to add that these accumulate over 4,500 signatures in this petition collected by Wilma McNeill.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have petitions here from Lynn Perrier from Thornhill, as well as Ray Boutin and Lise Labonté from Timmins, and they read as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I give this petition to Jake, who will bring it down to the table.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a

mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the provincial Parliament.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Kyle to give to the table.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" have been performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Joshua.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased on your behalf to introduce a petition. Thank you for the opportunity. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which would mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us" in rural Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care," especially our pharmacies, now, Premier McGuinty.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and hand it to one of the new pages, William.

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have yet again a petition, this time from Gisele Baka and Clara Davidson of Timmins. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I’ve signed that petition.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / *Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

On October 26, 2010, Ms. Matthews moved second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say “aye.”

All those opposed will say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

A recorded vote being required, I have received a note dated November 15 from the government House leader that this vote be deferred until deferred votes tomorrow.

Second reading vote deferred.

TICKET SPECULATION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS
DE SPECTACLE

Resuming the debated adjourned on November 4, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / *Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I’m pleased to enter into the debate on Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. I want to start by referencing that the last time this was in the Legislature—I’m not sure exactly what day that was—it was the fifth day of second reading and the member from Oxford had finished speaking to the bill at that point in time. The legislation was led off for second reading by the Attorney General; I believe that was either October 16 or 21. So it’s been before us now—I see it was October 21. This will be the fifth day, I understand, over the past month. There was a bit of a break between the time we recessed for the constituency week over the Remembrance Day period and today. We’re now back to it.

This particular piece of legislation is relatively simple, certainly in its intent. Obviously, the enforcement of these things becomes more challenging, I think, in part, but it’s relatively simple. It’s to provide a level of fairness and to ensure Ontarians that when they are purchasing tickets, particularly online, they have an opportunity to purchase those tickets at a fair market price as advertised when they make those calls or when they make that entry online; an example being, without getting into any specific show or individual, you can go online when it says, “Tickets go on sale at noon hour.” There’s 16,000 tickets or 20,000 tickets or 25,000 tickets, depending on the venues. And adults and young people go online to get tickets and three minutes after noon hour the tickets are sold out.

One has to figure, how do you sell out 25,000 tickets in three minutes, even online? But at the time they make that online request they’re immediately redirected to a secondary seller—a secondary seller who wants two and three times the face value for that ticket. And that secondary seller is a directly affiliated company with the company that was selling the ticket at the base price. So that \$100 ticket for the concert show that a young person wants to go see, or the \$50 ticket, is now going to cost \$150 or \$300 if they buy from the reseller. But the reseller is in effect an affiliate company. What really has

happened is that the primary company has only released a small fraction of the number of available tickets at that 12 o'clock time frame and the balance of those tickets have already been shifted over to a secondary company. And you as a purchaser, unaware, are being directed to that other company, that reseller, and assuming that all those tickets that were available have been snapped up and that the reseller has a small quantity and they're going to let you have them at this premium price. And because you or a young person in your family or someone else wants to go see this particular show or concert, as the case might be, you think you may be getting a bargain, even though you're paying the inflated price, because of the fact that you're assuming all the tickets have been snapped up and you've got one last opportunity. Well, that's not a fair practice; I would go as far as to say that that's not even an honest practice. This legislation, Bill 172, is clearly intended to stop that practice from occurring.

When the Attorney General spoke to this, he spoke specifically to these types of matters, that legislation has been introduced in other jurisdictions because of complaints in those jurisdictions, and we've seen the complaints here in Ontario. This legislation is being introduced to ensure that Ontarians, when they are taking advantage of the culture, sports and entertainment available to us, get things done fairly and honestly in their ticket prices.

We only have to take a look here in this great city of Toronto. It just happens that although my riding spans between Toronto and Durham region in Pickering—it's Pickering-Scarborough East—I'm actually a member of the Toronto caucus within our caucus, and thus I have a particular affinity to the city of Toronto. Some of my constituents in Pickering may not like that idea much, but when you look at the entertainment forums we have here in the city of Toronto, when we look at the cultural and sports opportunities that exist, it's particularly important, because of the amount of money that's being put through the system and because of the fact that we're trying to generate a tourism business around entertainment—and it's strong already—that those who are purchasing tickets to see plays and shows and sports entertainment here in Ontario are treated fairly and honestly. This particular legislation is going to be a big help in doing that.

We have the Open for Business approach that the government announced in its last budget. This is an element, although not a specific piece of legislation on that, of being open for business. If you want to do business in Ontario and if you want to come here, we want to ensure that you are being treated fairly, that you are getting your due, that you're getting an honest approach to the business environment. If we're not doing that, if we don't do the things necessary under legislation to ensure that people have the opportunity for sports and cultural events—and that's sometimes the disposable income. It's what draws people to this province and to this city, their disposable income. If they don't think they are getting a fair shake, if they find out they're not getting a fair shake, it certainly doesn't encourage them to con-

tinue spending their money here—our money, if we're local, or the tourists we have—and it certainly doesn't encourage those who want to invest in this province to make investments here. It's just one small example of what we can do to ensure that this province is and remains open for business.

We don't need to have major ticket sellers—and I don't think there's a particular need, at least on my part, to reference names. I think those out there who use ticket sellers, the main ones, know the names. It's like dialling for pizza: 967-1111. If you think about who you buy tickets from online, you know who the big players are. It's those big players, frankly, who have caused this to occur. They have been party to this. They are not alone in that, but they've been party to it. We need to ensure that they understand, from the standpoint of just not doing it, that it's not good business practice, but they have to understand there will also be consequences if they choose not to act now and certainly if they don't act in accordance with the law, once the legislation, if passed, is in place.

Now, any time one puts in place legislation of this nature, there is obviously a need and a requirement to ensure that there are penalties attached to it, so that there will be not only voluntary compliance—because, ideally, people respect the laws that are in place—but there will also be enforcement provisions. In this particular case, the enforcement provisions include fines, and those individuals who are convicted of this particular offence are liable to fines of a maximum of \$5,000, and a corporation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000.

Now, these are punitive fines, and they are intended to be. They are not punitive, I would suggest, to the extent that they would be putting out of business a large ticket seller or reseller, but they have to be substantive enough to send a clear message that behaviour of this nature, if it occurs, is unacceptable within the legislative framework that we have here in the province of Ontario.

The bill itself is not extensive, and it doesn't need to be. The members, I know, have read through the legislation. It can be found on a very few pages of paper because it doesn't have to be unnecessarily complex. It has to be reasonably straightforward.

1400

"Primary seller" means the person or the business who is engaged in the business of selling tickets as the principal putting the tickets forward. It includes "the owner of the place to which a ticket provides admission"; the promoter of the event is included for that purpose, "and any agent or broker of those persons." Those are considered the principals.

There are secondary sellers as well, but it's broad enough to capture this issue of being able to move the ticket sales from the primary seller, if you go online as an example, and that's the price, the tickets aren't available, you get redirected elsewhere—they're still considered to be part of the primary selling group. So you can't be, in effect, gouged—and there's not a much better word that could be used, "gouged"—by seeing the prices for a

ticket double and triple from what the face value is, simply because the company chose not to allow all the tickets go for sale under the primary account when people go online, but instead have moved offline, off to the side in another venue, thousands and thousands of those tickets.

One only needs to do the math. If we see venues where there are 20,000 and 25,000 people attending a concert and you start multiplying that by hundreds of dollars, you can see the fiscal impact, the potential profit margin available to these companies if they move these tickets elsewhere, as opposed to the real cost of putting on the venue and attracting the talent necessary to make these particular things happen.

I know that, like many in this room—many, or most of us—who have families, children and/or grandchildren—in my case, it's now the grandchildren that we hear from most frequently. I see their Facebook stuff, where they're all excited about a new band coming to town, a new young group of some sort, most of whom I don't know. I know that my granddaughters in Oshawa—I think that Hedley is the band of choice these days. As soon as tickets came on sale, my daughter was online looking for tickets for Hedley for the granddaughters to attend the concert in the Durham area.

You're always pleased when you know that they do that and they're going to get some entertainment and do the things they want to do. But it would also be nice to know that they'll be able to buy those tickets, that they'll be able to purchase them at a price that can be afforded. It would be nice to know if the young person is sharing in that cost—if they have part-time jobs or are at school, mom and dad might say, "Look, I'm happy to support you in doing that, but I can't afford to buy your \$75 ticket or your \$100 ticket to this particular venue," if there are two or three young people in the family. But the parents are saying, "I'll share the cost with you. If you can save some money through your allowance or a part-time job, I'll pay for half the cost of that ticket, but I can't pay the whole thing."

What a disappointment it is to that young person who goes online, sees the tickets advertised for \$50 or \$75 to a band that they find that they would like to see, a talent that they're really attracted to, and suddenly, they're redirected from that website to somewhere else. The tickets aren't \$50 now; the tickets, because they're with a reseller, are now \$150. How disappointed are they going to be? They don't have that kind of money. They don't have it in their savings. Mom and dad committed to paying half the price of a small ticket, and now that has gone up three times. It's that kind of unfairness to Ontarians that this legislation is clearly intended to correct.

The issue was drawn to our attention, as I said earlier, as it has been drawn to the attention of others in other jurisdictions over the past year or more, probably, at this point in time, because it has been seen to be cropping up in various jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have already been able to get legislation in place or take the necessary actions. We're in that process now with the introduction

of legislation not more than a couple of months ago, but certainly, if I go back to—actually the introduction of the legislation was as early as the end of April 2009, but then, shortly thereafter, once the summer came, we were into our summer recess period. The legislation was introduced for second reading in the latter part of October, and now we're into the middle of November, with our fifth or sixth day of debate. Soon, I think, if this Legislative Assembly will conclude its debate on the matter, as many members in this place who wish to speak to it have that opportunity, we'll be able to move, presumably, to committee for any additional inputs that may be required or desirable at that point in time, and then bring it back to this place, ideally for third reading debate and the ultimate adoption of the legislation so that it can be put into place with any regulatory necessities that will come with it.

Ontarians work hard. Ontarians have come through a difficult period of late with the economy, as have other jurisdictions throughout the world. Ontarians want to be able to raise their families, they want some disposable income, and they want to enjoy the culture and entertainment and sports venues that this great province has to provide to them. As part of that struggle that they continually go through, no less so of late, the last thing they need is that with the disposable income they might have left, when they're making those conscious choices about what they want to do with that small amount of disposable income to enjoy the culture that we have here in the province, to enjoy the sport and entertainment venues—the last thing they want to have happen is that that hard-earned money is effectively being gouged away from them by inflated ticket prices for these venues because of the fact that a promoter, a primary seller, has chosen to set up a strategy effectively where those costs are going to double or triple. All that does is take money out of the system.

It takes money out of the system that supports culture and entertainment here in Ontario because that money, in all likelihood, will be spent a second time. It's more likely that if people can buy those tickets at the fair face value that's put out there with the additional disposable income—if they think they got a fair deal, they'll go somewhere else. They'll go to another venue. They'll go to another show. But if they're being gouged, if suddenly those ticket prices are ramped up to such a degree—doubled and tripled—they're not going to take that second opportunity. They're not going to go to that second show; they're not going to go to the other sports event. They're going to say:

"I spent all I can. Every time I tried to purchase a ticket and thought I was getting fair value, I found out that I was just going to be paying two and three times that amount. I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm just going to stop bothering to look. I'm not going to encourage my young people, my family, my children to do those kinds of things because I know what's going to happen to them. They're going to get all excited about the possibilities of seeing their favourite new band, their favourite new entertainer, at a price they think they can

afford or they can share with their parents, and they're going to find out that those costs have escalated dramatically. And they're going to turn off. They're going to turn off to the opportunities that exist here in Ontario."

I spoke at the beginning a bit about Toronto—just very briefly, since my riding, as I said, bounds Toronto and Durham region—and the great venues we have here right in the city, the entertainment opportunities we have, the growing centre of entertainment and culture. The last thing we want to do is to diminish that in some fashion, and we don't want to see it diminished by discouraging people from taking part in those opportunities because they have been priced out of the marketplace in an unfair fashion.

We know there are different arrangements in the province by which tickets are sold, but this particular piece of legislation is to deal with those sectors where ticket sales are being redirected and inflated with no value added. That's a big part of it. You can't put a ticket up for sale and say, "I want three times as much," and there's no value added in that. It's simply, "We've decided the best way to make money is to hold back a bunch of tickets, move them sideways, to redirect you over there almost automatically," and make you feel, "If I don't grab this ticket today at three times the value, I'm not going to get to see that particular event or the young person in my family is not going to get the opportunity to see that event, and they really want to go." This is something they've been looking for. This is the birthday present. This is the Christmas present. This is the graduation present. You really feel obligated to pay that inflated value because of the fact that you've made that commitment. You don't want to go back to that young person and say, "I'm sorry about your birthday present, I'm sorry about the graduation present, I'm sorry about the Christmas present. You could have gone. It was just going to cost me a lot more." You don't want to do that, so, more often than not, the parent will hit that enter button, and put in that credit card number and pay the price, not knowing that they could have had that same ticket at the fair value price, the market price, from exactly the same promoter in the absence of the capacity to do what's happening out there right now.

1410

I'm looking forward to the balance of the debate on this particular piece of legislation. I know when this is done—and presumably it's going to committee—that the members of the committee and the public who may have a direct interest will want to provide insight if the legislation could be strengthened in some fashion—I know that committees are always anxious to have that discussion—and subsequently to see it back here in this place at the earliest opportunity. As we reach toward the Christmas season, obviously it may be difficult to have it back here before us before that time period, but the debate in this place hopefully gets out to the public and those ticket sellers understand what's coming down the pike. They will act in their own interest in the absence of the legislation, and the legislation will enforce what needs to be done and provide a manner of compliance

through a fine structure for those who choose not to comply with the legislation once it's in place.

I, as a consumer, on behalf of myself and my family in particular, in that sense, as each of us would be, want to ensure that I'm getting fair value, that I'm not being gouged and that I can continue to support culture, sports and entertainment in this great province of Ontario and particularly for me here in the city of Toronto

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I listened with some interest to the member for Pickering–Scarborough East in his presentation this afternoon on Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act. He gave a very interesting talk about this bill from his perspective, and of course he echoed many of the comments that are being made by the government members with respect to this legislation.

We all know, I think, that the Ticket Speculation Act currently prohibits the reselling of tickets above the face value of a ticket, but we all know that scalping continues to persist outside of many sporting events in particular and, I assume, many rock concerts and so forth where tickets are in short supply and in high demand. I just want to ask the member this question: If the government is incapable of enforcing the existing Ticket Speculation Act, how are they going to enforce the provisions of Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me tell you a story which sets this legislation in context. Imagine your child has come to you and said, "Mother or Dad, there's a concert I want to see," and you want to give your child a ticket for that concert. Your child says, "This has been advertised widely" and the tickets are X dollars. You put a call in and find out that within a day or so of the tickets going on sale there are no more tickets on sale at that primary location, and you're directed to a secondary outlet. You call the secondary outlet, and it's a price that's much, much higher. That's not fair.

The mischief that this legislation is intended to get at is those tickets for a concert or a sports event that are advertised, there are lots of tickets available, they cost X dollars, and then when you go to buy them, you find out that there are only a limited number of tickets at X dollars and really the price is X plus Y. That's a sort of misleading advertising. This legislation is a piece of consumer protection legislation. It's directed against that. It eliminates that differential between the primary and the secondary market.

What the legislation does not do and is not intended to do is to prevent those people who have tickets and, for whatever reason, find they can't use them on the night of—they can resell those tickets at the same price they purchased them. So those people are protected. But it's to get at this mischief of the difference between the primary and the secondary market. That's good consumer protection legislation. The people of Ontario in these tough economic times deserve that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Quite frankly, I'm overwhelmed at the number of calls I'm getting in my office about this issue. I can't believe we're spending five hours of debate time to talk about tickets and ticket scalping. My Lord, haven't we got something better to do in the province of Ontario? Yes, we do, and we should be talking about it right here, and a lot more things. Is this a, "Let's get off the agenda and let's talk about something that's not really that important" so the public at large out there have something to say about it—well, I don't know. I haven't had any calls. I've never used a scalper, but I've got to tell you, if there's people out there who are utilizing those services and they think that's the way to go, then maybe that's what should be happening in the province of Ontario.

I'm not so sure we're going to oppose the legislation because I'm not sure of the depth and the in-depth content that we're dealing with here that's going to be so important to so many people in the province that we have to stand up and vote against it.

Anyway, I just think that there are a lot better things that we could be debating. I know the ticket scalping issue can be, for those individuals, a very contentious issue, and if you want to hear what I really feel about it I can certainly tell you. I've never used a scalper, and if there's a service out there—I don't know if my kids ever have; I couldn't tell you offhand. I've been approached at a number of football games; upgrade, downgrade and that sort of thing on your tickets or hockey games etc. But realistically, I don't see it as being a major problem in the province that we need to be contending with at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wasn't going to get up but I want to applaud the comments made by my colleague from—

Interjection: Oshawa.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oshawa—I'm very good with the ridings.

I agree with him. I haven't got a single phone call on this issue. I normally get calls, emails or letters, but we've got about five hours of debate so far.

I'll tell you, we are being scalped in Ontario, and I want the member to know that he was remiss in not pointing out that people are scalped by this government every time they get a hydro bill in this province. All you've got to do is look at your hydro bill and see you've been scalped by the HST, you've been scalped by the new—what do they call those?—smart meters, and you're getting scalped every time you go and pay for services in our municipalities or across this province.

Scalping: Yes, we need legislation, but I want to say to my colleagues that the best legislation I know of to stop scalping in this province is to get rid of this government in the next election, vote Andrea Horwath, vote often, vote early and elect a New Democratic government. That will be the end of scalping.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Pickering—Scarborough East has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm really pleased to be back after the week away to see that the official opposition and third party have come to life over this issue.

The member from Oshawa has got the GM Centre in downtown Oshawa with thousands and thousands of seats there. They run some great shows. I was mentioning that Hedley was there recently, I think, and two of my granddaughters were there.

This issue is not about the one-off scalping that occurs outside the venue where they try to upgrade you or downgrade you—"You got there a little late. I've got some tickets; you can buy them cheaper." This is about the redirecting of thousands and thousands of tickets from a primary seller when you go online to a secondary seller in which the prices are doubled and tripled, and you don't know you're being scammed. At least when you go to the GM Centre and the guy outside is trying to sell you tickets, you know you're being scammed, unlike some other venues where you're not sure. Having said that, this is different. This is not this one-off scalping.

I want to thank the members from Wellington—Halton Hills, Willowdale, Oshawa and Timmins—James Bay obviously for their comments and their interest in this particular matter today. This is a matter of interest to families and young people. Our phones aren't ringing off the hook over it and they shouldn't necessarily. But it is a matter when there are tens of thousands of dollars or millions of dollars being scammed from Ontarians who want to attend sports events, cultural events, entertainment events and they don't know that they're being scammed out of their money by virtue of this process that's currently in place.

This legislation will help to ensure that. It certainly will be much easier to manage and monitor than the one-off scalping at the venue by virtue of the scale of the activity that's going on, and it certainly would be our hope that those large ticket sellers will be getting the message with or without the legislation. This practice is simply unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak for approximately 20 minutes on Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. I wanted to thank the member for Oshawa as well for bringing some life to this debate. I'm going to bring it back down to a somewhat quieter level probably, but I do appreciate this opportunity to speak this afternoon on the bill that was introduced in this House on April 29, 2009, some 18 months ago.

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It's interesting that this bill has sat on the order paper for a year and a half. Obviously the government, when it brought forward the bill, would have wanted people to think it was responding to a matter of extreme urgency in the province of Ontario, that there was a serious issue that had to be dealt with. Legislation had to be brought

into the Legislature and passed through the House so that a significant problem would be solved. Of course, we see a bill that has sat there now for 18 months.

The Attorney General has brought forward the bill and talked about the need to address this issue. Our party's critic to the Attorney General, the member for Halton, who does a fine job in that capacity for our caucus, has offered some of his response and opinion. I know that our caucus is going to continue to have discussions on this issue.

Let's look at the explanatory note in the bill: "The bill amends the Ticket Speculation Act to provide that it is an offence for related primary and secondary sellers to make available for sale in Ontario tickets for admission to the same event. An individual who is convicted of this offence is liable to a maximum fine of \$5,000; a corporation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000. The Attorney General is given the power to make regulations exempting any person or class of persons from the act and prescribing conditions attaching to an exemption."

The bill itself is a page and a half, if you look at the bill as it is printed by the Legislative Assembly.

I think it's important to look at, from the opposition perspective, some of the comments that we are hearing from some of the organizations that will be affected by this piece of legislation. Ticketmaster, I'm advised, responded to this bill the day it was introduced. They said that they were "disappointed with the intention of the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, 2009, especially insofar as the proposed changes do nothing to enhance consumer protection. Ticketmaster has worked to enable the fair and secure distribution of tickets in Canada for more than 20 years," and they indicated that they would "welcome a thorough and public examination of how ticket distribution actually works. Ticketmaster would support an initiative that protects those consumers electing to purchase in the resale market—a market created and fed by consumer demand for scarce event tickets. Enhanced technologies such as paperless ticketing are poised to reshape the ticketing and live entertainment business and consumers stand to benefit greatly, for example, from the opportunity to electronically validate any resold tickets they choose to purchase."

So of course, Ticketmaster is affected by this legislation. They are responding with comments that would lead you to wonder whether or not the government has its act together with respect to this issue.

"As previously explained, Ticketmaster does not own or control the tickets to Ontario events that are sold through Ticketmaster or TicketsNow. We sell tickets to the public on behalf of our many sports team, venue and promoter clients, and we host a resale marketplace where Ontarians interested in the resale marketplace can safely purchase tickets from third parties. We are committed to providing a transparent, secure marketplace that assures the many Ontarians that use our Ticketmaster and TicketsNow services that the tickets they buy are genuine and redeemable, and that their personal and financial information is secure. We do not divert tickets to TicketsNow or provide preferential access to the third parties who

resell tickets on TicketsNow. Like other online marketplaces and ticket resale in general, TicketsNow is fuelled by the public's demand for scarce event tickets."

There is the comment from Ticketmaster. I would hope that if this bill goes to committee, organizations and companies like Ticketmaster would have a chance to come forward and to provide their feedback on this bill. Certainly they have a story to tell as to how they administer their business, and I would suggest that it's up to the government and it is incumbent upon the government to listen.

The member for Oshawa made a number of interesting points a couple of moments ago on a two-minute hit, as we call it, and I'd like to follow up on what he said. In the last week, when I was privileged to be in my riding for constituency week and attending the Remembrance Day events and observances, attending at many of the Legions, I had a chance to talk to hundreds of people. Not one person brought up the issue that has been raised by Bill 172. You would think, if you had the chance to speak to hundreds of people over the course of a couple of days, that there might be one person who would express concern about an issue like this. Not one did. It makes you wonder, if someone is tuning in today or if someone is visiting in the visitors' gallery, listening to this debate: Would they be scratching their heads and wondering, "What on earth are they doing in the Ontario Legislature talking about this when there are so many other pressing problems that are facing the province of Ontario and the people of Ontario?"

We found out today that the government has deferred and delayed its fall economic statement that it was due to bring into this House today, at the latest. In fact, legislation compels the government to do this. A bill that they passed, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, I believe it's called, that was one of their hallmark pieces of legislation in their first term, compels and requires the government to bring forward a fall economic statement before November 15. It is written in the legislation as such. It's amazing that the government would ignore its own legislation.

Today, of course, the Minister of Finance tabled a letter with the Clerk to indicate that they would not be bringing forward the fall economic statement today. They weren't ready to go. In fact, they're waiting for a little bit more information, and they plan to bring it into this House on Thursday.

It's pretty clear to me that the reason they don't want to have it brought into the House today, in accordance with their own legislation, the law that they passed with a great deal of fanfare back in perhaps 2004, is because they don't want the opposition to be able to respond to the fall economic statement in a meaningful way. They don't want us to have the opportunity tomorrow to have question period and to ask the minister questions, to get more details and to try to get him to give a more complete and further explanation of what the government's mid-term budgetary policy would be. They wouldn't want us to be able to do that again on Wednesday; they wouldn't want us to be able to do it again on Thursday.

What they would hope to do is have this fall economic statement on Thursday afternoon. Hopefully, there will be some government members here, but, of course, there usually isn't the greatest turnout of members during a Thursday afternoon session, as we know. That is the rule and that is the reality.

The fact is, they don't want us to be able to talk about the financial position of the province over the course of this week. The House is only sitting for four more weeks and then we're scheduled to rise after that. Of course, we'll have the chance to go home to our ridings just before Christmas.

But the fact is, the province of Ontario is in a fiscal crisis. The media haven't written a lot about it, but occasionally there have been articles. The deficit is close to \$20 billion; that's the most recent number that we've seen. We wonder if the \$20-billion deficit is understating the reality. The government has said that they will bring forward a balanced budget plan, and they claim and promise to balance the budget by 2018. But if you look at the details and the fine print that is associated with that so-called plan that is in the most recent provincial budget, brought forward by the government this spring, it indicates that the only way they can balance the budget by 2018 is if they control spending to less than a 2% increase per year. This government has never come even close to that. For the government to hold spending at less than 2% a year would require a level of restraint that this government is totally incapable of doing. In fact, they're not interested in doing it. This government is, and they are quite proud of it, here to spend. They are here to spend money on public services—that was certainly their mantra in their first term—and they believe that that's their mandate.

The fact is, we need expenditure control. We need to have a greater effort to control spending. We need to have a laser focus on the expenditure side of the ledger. We need to find waste and eliminate it. This is what this government either doesn't understand or is totally incapable of pursuing by way of a policy.

Again, I heard a lot of other concerns from my constituents over the last week. I heard about hydro rates; I heard about smart meters. This government's plan to force the people of Ontario to go to time-of-use pricing for hydro is not going over well with my constituents. There's still a substantial number of my constituents who are out of work, and many who are underemployed, who have lost a good-paying job and have had to accept a lower-paying job, hoping for a better future. But there's obviously a great deal of economic dislocation and anxiety related to those situations in many households across Wellington county and across Halton region.

I continue to hear expressions of concern about the high level of tax in the province of Ontario, and this government certainly has added to the level of tax and the tax burden with the introduction of its HST. Of course, we heard, when the HST was being debated in the Legislature, the claims of the Minister of Revenue of the day that manufacturers would pass along the savings, that goods would actually become cheaper once the HST

was introduced. Clearly, that hasn't happened. We also of course were told the cheques would be in the mail. To the extent the cheques were received by constituents, the money is long gone, and in many cases people can't afford to pay their hydro bill.

1430

Two or three weeks ago, I had the opportunity to bring forward a private member's resolution to call attention to the needs of the hospitals in my riding. The Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus has an ambitious plan to move forward with a brand new hospital. Our community raised \$15 million in pledges and cash in the bank. We are ready to go, to move forward to the next stage of planning for our new hospital. We would hope to have the government's approval to do that. We know we're not going to get a new hospital next year. People in my riding are very realistic about that, but at the same time people expect and hope that the government will give us the approval to move forward to the next stage. That's certainly a big issue in my riding. In my conversations with constituents over the last number of weeks, people have talked to me about it many times. People were very disappointed that the government voted down my motion a few weeks ago in this regard. Certainly, also, the hospital in Georgetown has a need for a small capital grant, and they hope to have some indication from the government as to whether or not that might be forthcoming any time in the near future. They have approval for a CT scanner and they're looking forward to raising the money to install that important diagnostic service in their hospital, at the same time doing a renovation to the emergency department and making sure that they can accommodate the CT scanner. Again, they need answers from this government.

I continue to call upon the government to release its long-term capital construction plan for hospitals. I have asked through freedom of information to receive this information. I would have expected to have it by now. I hope to have the chance tomorrow at the estimates committee to ask the Minister of Health some additional questions about this subject, because it's not just my communities that are waiting. In fact, when I was discussing my issue with a number of members on the day that my private member's resolution was debated, a significant number of government members said to me, "I've got a hospital project too in my riding." Many of them said that; and they're all looking for answers. I think it's important that you give communities a better understanding of where they are on the list—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —at the same time health care has to be the number one priority. Yes, I would encourage you to ensure that the health care needs of the people of the province are met. Certainly that should be the number one priority of any government; it would be if we were in government. If we form the government in a year's time, I'm sure it will be, too.

Getting back to this bill, I know that many members of the Legislature will still have a chance to speak to this

bill because in fact the government doesn't have a great deal of legislation on the order paper at the present time. This bill is scheduled to be called for debate on a number of occasions this week. Again, one would question the priorities of the government when there are so many issues that are of importance to the people of Ontario and yet Bill 172 seems to be the number one thing on the agenda this week.

I think it's important also to point out some of the concerns that our caucus has with respect to this bill. We understand consumers' outrage. We support consumer protection, market fairness and consumer choice, but we have questions and reservations as to whether or not this bill will in fact improve consumer protection. This legislation appears to target one group of ticket sellers and ignore others such as brokers and scalpers. It will drive the market underground, where there is even less consumer protection. I have yet to hear any of the government members, in the course of this debate, indicate how this bill will be enforced, especially given the fact that, as we all know, there is a great deal of ticket scalping today. It takes place outside sporting events in the province of Ontario almost every time there's a greater demand for tickets than there is supply, and it's certainly the same thing for concerts. Whenever I've attended a concert, there's a great deal of selling of tickets on the sidewalk just outside the venue, and it appears that the existing law is not being enforced.

We would again question whether or not this bill will in fact create fairness, because the Ticket Speculation Act prohibiting the reselling of tickets above the tickets' value is currently not being enforced. It would appear that this is another example where the Liberal government has important legislation on the books but is not enforcing it. Contraband tobacco of course is another very good example. I would again call attention to the fact that this bill appears to be another effort to take up the time of the Legislature and to some degree divert attention from the bigger problems in the province of Ontario. This bill sat on the shelves for about 18 months, from the time it was introduced on April 29, 2009, until this month. It seemed to be dusted off at an opportune time to divert attention away from Liberal scandals. It was brought up, in fact, during the midst of what we call the eHealth 2.0 scandal to divert attention away from the Liberals' waste.

We believe that this bill will do very little, if anything, to address consumers' outrage, and the Liberals are using this bill to waste valuable time in this House to avoid taking responsibility for the scandals that have already wasted billions of Ontarians' hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

We see that, once again, the government is bringing forward legislation that appears to be intended to divert attention away from some of the more significant problems that the province of Ontario is facing. We see government calling Bill 172 for debate on a number of occasions this week, really, when there are all kinds and all manner of significant problems in the province of Ontario, whether it's jobs and the economy, whether it's

the budgetary crisis, whether it's hydro rates, smart meters, the lack of jobs, the need to cut taxes, health care, education, protection of the environment—all the important issues that people in their day-to-day lives would expect the provincial government to be dealing with, and coming forward with meaningful progress. Certainly, my constituents would expect that, as we sit here in the next four weeks, we would be deliberating the serious problems that they know exist in their communities. In fact, what we see here today is that we're standing here debating Bill 172 for the majority of the afternoon and probably for a number of the other sessions this week. We would question the government's priorities in that respect and in that regard.

I would expect that the government will want to send this bill to committee, again, to continue to drag on the debate. I suppose that there will be an opportunity for some of the interested parties and the various organizations that have an interest in this to have their say. But I would encourage the government, if it is going to pursue that approach, to at least listen to the organizations that are coming forward.

What we see now, in the seventh year of this Liberal government, is a government that, in many cases, has lost its footing. It has lost its way. It has become panicked because of the low poll numbers. There is a chance, I suppose, that there will be significant movement on this issue. Most majority governments—certainly, their record in the last seven years is that they've been unwilling to listen, in many cases, after they've set their position in stone. But, in fact, we see now that there is an opportunity, perhaps, for groups and organizations who are opposed to the bill—if they bring forward a significant measurement of public opinion, then the government, perhaps, will reconsider some of the issues and the positions it has taken.

In conclusion, our caucus will continue to carefully monitor this issue. We would again call upon the government to bring forward more meaningful legislation in this House that addresses some of the fundamental problems that the province is facing. Again, I come back to the jobs and the economy challenges, the issue of hydro, the issue of high taxes, the issue of health care, education, community safety and protection of our natural environment. All of these issues are significant to my constituents in my riding, and people would expect the government to be bringing forward meaningful policies and legislation that will address their concerns in respect of those issues. They would be less likely to be impressed with a lot of time being spent on Bill 172.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I couldn't disagree with the member opposite more. I have to think of the people who are buying tickets that are scalped wholesale, scalped on an industrial scale. What about their hard-earned wages? Aren't the hard-earned wages of somebody who works at nearly a minimum job and would like to see their favourite singer or their favourite sports team—aren't they important? I think they are. It's important to them. It's

important to a lot of people who may overpay simply because they say that that's always the way it's been, but it doesn't have to be that way. They'll overpay now because that seems to be the world as we know it. I think it's our duty as legislators to say that because a wrong has been perpetuated for as long as people could generate tickets wholesale using a computer, we should just accept that. I don't believe that.

1440

In our time in this Legislature, we've said collectively that it's wrong to overcharge for payday loans, but if it's wrong to overcharge for payday loans, why is it right to overcharge for theatre tickets, concert tickets and sports event tickets? I think if it's wrong, it's wrong. If it's wrong for payday loans, it should be wrong if what we're talking about is a theatre ticket.

I have a lot of respect for the people who buy those tickets. If you're a party in that wholesale scalping, what you're doing is not merely to the people who pay it but to the ushers, the attendants, the people who do the cleaning. You're taking the money out of their pocket too, and that's wrong. That's what this bill is intended to do. This bill is intended to correct a wrong that's inflicted on a lot of people who don't have a loud voice, and their voice is in here in this Legislature, and we're going to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I listened with great interest to what I thought were very thoughtful, balanced comments that were made by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. He sort of dealt with it in both the specific and the general context.

In terms of the specifics of the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, he rightfully pointed out that there are a number of stakeholders who are quite concerned with this legislation. They don't believe it's going to bring about the necessary consumer protection, and in fact it might even have the opposite effect: It may exacerbate some of the problems that we're already seeing because it may drive ticket speculation even further underground and actually get people going more to ticket scalpers and to other people that we want this legislation to do away with and to prevent. But the general concern that he mentioned is also a concern that I would share, which is that this government is not really moving forward with the issues that really matter to the people of Ontario.

We had the opportunity back in our ridings this past week to speak to our constituents. What I'm hearing from my constituents is that they're concerned about things like finding a long-term-care placement for their parent or loved one; they're concerned about the complete failure of the aging-at-home strategy because it's so vastly under-resourced that we have people who are in serious jeopardy with respect to health matters living in our community. We have people with special needs who are not getting the attention they need, either in our schools or trying to find jobs. They're not being supported adequately financially and they're living lives of poverty.

Why aren't these the issues that we're talking about here in this Legislature? Why are we talking about the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act? There are many more things that should be occupying our time, but, quite frankly, this is a government that's just out of gas and out of ideas. That's why we're dealing with it. We should be moving on to more important things.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did come in late, but I was in my office listening to my good friend. I do consider him a good friend, my friend from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Just a little side story, Madam Speaker. In 1996, I was on the Memorial Cup organizing committee in the city of Peterborough. It's the only time to date that we hosted the Memorial Cup. I was on the organization committee, and I remember what was interesting about that. The last game was on Sunday between the famous Peterborough Petes and the less famous Granby Prédateurs. That was the first time in my life growing up in Peterborough that we actually had scalpers in front of the Memorial Centre. They were lined up. My goodness, they were lined up. There were about 24 of them. It was rather amusing going and seeing these 24 scalpers out in front of the Peterborough Memorial Centre. I think they had all the tickets from the Brandon Wheat Kings because they were eliminated in that Memorial Cup, with all due respect to that wonderful junior A franchise in Brandon, Manitoba. They were eliminated early on in the competition, so there were many of their supporters who still had tickets from the Memorial Cup package that great year, and 24 of them were all out front; they were scalping tickets. Then, as a good city councillor of Peterborough, I was certainly encouraging people not to take advantage of those scalpers who were out front. You know—

Mr. Robert Bailey: They were buying them from you instead.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Sarnia said they were buying them from me. That was probably right, because I think I had some extra tickets that I was trying to perhaps give away. I was looking for members of the O'Toole family that day. I thought a few of them might be arriving to see the last game.

You know, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, to come back to the debate, I think had some comments that were worthy. As you know, Madam Speaker, we send all the pieces of legislation to committee, and this bill will go to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I thought, for the most part, stuck closely to our script on this. What is really saddening on this is that the amount of time it has taken here—I've looked up the minutes, how often this thing has been debated. Let's go back and recall that the bill was introduced in April 2009. You'd wonder why, by April 2010, nothing had been talked about. It was all a show in response to an event that happened that some people in the media thought to be an inappropriate use of scalpers.

Now, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills did read the official position of Ticketmaster, who I’m sure want to appear before the committee and clarify this. I’ve just read in Hansard that our critic believes that this bill does nothing. In fact, it goes on to say, and I’m quoting on the bill—this was debated by Mr. Chudleigh, whom I’m subbing for today. Normally he’s the whip today. But the funny thing is, and here’s the issue: He was speaking on November 3, and he went on to say that he understands this bill thoroughly, but it’s not much to understand, because it’s about half a page. For the people viewing here today, one side is French; the other side is English. Actually, the preamble is longer than the bill itself.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The title is.

Mr. John O’Toole: The title. But in fairness to Mr. Bentley, the Attorney General, what he said here is, “Let me say at the outset”—this is Mr. Chudleigh speaking; if he was here today, he probably would be saying it—“[it] will not create one more ticket, nor will this legislation save people who buy tickets one thin dime. This legislation will do nothing to solve those problems.”

This again is a government that has run out of ideas; the member from Whitby–Oshawa said it. We on this side are convinced that they can’t get the budget numbers together in time, even though they promised in the legislation. Now—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the members for Whitby–Oshawa and Durham for responding to my speech and expressing support for some of the sentiments that I had brought forward with regard to my comments.

I want to respond to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville and the member for Peterborough, who didn’t find the speech to be quite as enlightening, I guess, as my colleagues on this side of the House. It was interesting that neither of those government members indicated that they had ever had a call, ever had an email, ever received a letter, or had ever been approached by a constituent to identify that this was a big issue and that the government needed to bring forward legislation to solve it.

Neither government member indicated how this bill would be enforced. Again, they talk about the value judgment that the government has drawn in terms of what is appropriate in terms of the sale of these tickets. They’re trying to make a statement, apparently, but they haven’t indicated how it will be enforced. The fact is that the government may pass a bill, but if it’s not going to be enforced, what will change? What, in real life, will actually change?

I think that’s something that the government is going to have to address during the course of this debate. If they’re going to call this bill for debate for a number of days over the course of this week, I hope that some government member addresses the enforcement issue so that we can have a better understanding of how they

actually intend to ensure that this bill has the force of law behind it and, in fact, something will change as a result of this Bill 172, which clearly the government intends to pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

1450

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is for me a pleasure to stand and speak to this particular measure. I take exception to the calls that I’ve heard that somehow or other this isn’t important. I would consider that funds that I used to earn as a teenager, in an era before there were computers, and that I could spend to attend events—I thought they were important to me. I remember very well the events that I attended through the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s. What I remember is tickets being affordable. But right now, what we have is a situation in which a ticket vendor, Ticketmaster, can, almost at the moment that their tickets are released to the general public, flip enormous blocks of them over to a wholly owned subsidiary, TicketsNow. If you want to attend an event, even if you’ve lined up and patiently waited and you’re at the front of the line, expecting that you can go in and say, “I’m number one. I get to buy the seat of my choice”—only to find out that the only things available are the ones up in the nosebleed section, the tickets up in the greys, in the bleachers. You think to yourself, “There’s got to be something wrong there. I patiently waited.” And some people will wait upwards of a day, because it’s that important to them. Or they’ll find out that the ticket that was advertised as \$50, \$80, \$100, \$120—which is real money today—is in fact \$350, \$500, \$1,000, \$1,500 on the secondary site. You think to yourself, “I never had a chance to get it on the primary site. Why do I have to go to the secondary site?”

A point I’ve made on a number of occasions is: When these tickets are flipped en masse to a secondary site, all done by computers, is the artist getting the return on the ticket price? Oh, no. How about the people who set up, take down and clean up the arena? Are they getting the return on a ticket that may sell for four, five, 10, 15 times its face value? They don’t get a penny. Nobody gets a penny except the middleman, the ticket promoter. It’s not as if there was an open competition to say, “If there are unsold tickets”—which there never are—“which middleman will submit the best bid to be able to turn around in the after-market”—because that never happens. They’re all flipped to the same wholly owned subsidiary, and it’s wrong; it’s completely wrong.

I’m going to use an analogy that I’ve used before. We in this Legislature have talked about payday loans. In a payday loan, who is it who gets exploited? It’s not the people who are well-heeled; it’s not the people who have connections; it’s the people who are at the bottom end of the scale, who are living from paycheque to paycheque. They’ll bring their paycheque in, and maybe they haven’t got or can’t get a bank account. What are they paying? A huge effective interest rate on being able to cash a cheque. We’ve said that that practice is wrong; that practice has got to stop. Why? Because it simply takes from people who are vulnerable.

That's what ticket scalping does. Ticket scalping isn't, in this act, considered to be a couple of people who have gone out and taken their season's tickets and are standing in front of a concert venue or an arena saying, "Hey, who wants my tickets? I can't go to the game tonight." It's not. It's the wholesale flipping of not merely dozens or hundreds but thousands, often tens of thousands, of tickets from their face-value price to a price that's many multiples of that face-value price, so that someone who is coming in and saying, "I've saved up for this. I can afford two \$100 tickets to attend a concert by my favourite performer. Why do I have to pay \$500 a pop for them?"—the answer is, "You shouldn't, because all of that money is being retained by the middleman, and it's being retained in a practice that's nothing other than monopolistic." The practice is wrong and the practice has to be stopped. That's what this bill does.

It's a short bill, but it corrects a wrong. For all of us here, that's what we got elected to do. Every now and then, we have a chance to come to the Legislature and to stand up and say, "We have an opportunity today to correct a wrong, to make life a little bit better for people who have no other means of recourse," because the ticket buyer can't begin civil litigation against Ticketmaster or TicketsNow; the ticket buyer can't make an allegation of whether there is or isn't an improper business relationship between a vendor and an after-market vendor; and a ticket buyer isn't one who can say, "I can prove that you guys just used your own computer systems, which are linked, and flipped a whole block of tickets without ever offering them to the general public." They can't do that. They're entirely, completely at the mercy of whoever has the tickets. It's the law of supply and demand. If the tickets are flipped to an after-market vendor, then the only way you can get them is to pay through the nose, and that's wrong. That's what this bill sets out to correct.

This isn't just an isolated incident. It's not like it happened for a single concert last week. It's not like it's something that has been going on in just one or two instances. It's not like it's something that's restricted to a single type of event. It has been proven to be shockingly profitable. If you want to earn fair money in entertainment, then for heaven's sake, offer something to the end-user. If you're just part of the distribution channel and you're saying, "Owing to the laws of supply and demand and the fact that I've got the supply and you guys are the demand, I can charge you whatever the market will bear," you're taking money out of the pockets of the people who are at the low end of the scale, who help out in getting those arenas ready for the performers who show up and say, "Some of this should be ours. This represents value for our intellectual property, our performance, and we're not getting any of it. All that's happening is that a computer is flipping all of this value, many times more than we ourselves as the performers get, into the pockets of somebody; nobody knows who they are, and nobody knows where their office is. All they are is a website." Whether that website is called TicketsNow or Ticketmaster or some other thing, what

this piece of legislation aims to do is to say that if you're the vendor, you cannot have that tightly-knit relationship with your after-market counterpart, to whom you can flip entire blocks of tickets without ever offering them at all, or in any meaningful way, to people who have a legitimate right to be able to buy them for their face-value price. What you're doing is denying an entire class of consumer the opportunity to pay a fair and agreed price between the vendor and the performer. They say, "If we agree that our ticket price will range from \$75 to \$200 and whatever, people should be able to buy those tickets at that price. If what we were doing was any other type of retailing, the consumer would be up in arms."

Because the consumers of entertainment are often people who are young and who have worked very hard for the money for a long period of time, we often say, "Well, nobody squawked about it. Nobody has taken them to court, so why should we get involved?" We can always say that there's something else we should be doing. But on this particular Monday afternoon, I think this is a good use of the Legislature's time. I think it's time that we stood up as legislators and said, "We consider this to be wrong." We're going to pass this bill. No matter how long it takes, we're going to say to young men and young women, "This practice is going to end. We're going to give the Ministry of the Attorney General and we're going to give those who have the authority to enforce the law the tools to be able to break up that racket"—because that's all it is: It's a racket. When one does this, sooner or later, the law catches up to you. In the business of flipping huge blocks of tickets and making windfall profits for adding no value to the performance, the game is up, the racket is over, and it's time that we got down to it.

1500

I'd like to refer to some of the points that the Attorney General covered off before because I think some of them are important, and they bear repeating. A little more than a year ago, other jurisdictions jumped up, and they started doing, lo and behold, the same thing. In Ontario, we had a Leonard Cohen concert that caused great consternation, and in the United States, it was Bruce Springsteen, the Boss, who was upset about tickets to his concert and prompted other performers to speak. The problem is that performers are hearing from their customers, who say, "Look, I'm a fan. I'd like to come and see you, and I'm willing to pay the face value of the ticket. But your \$100 ticket isn't a \$100 ticket; it's a \$300 ticket. It's just not right." I would agree with them: It's just not right. I agree with the performers. I agree with the fans.

They haven't sent us, as members of provincial Parliament, into this Legislature to stand up and say, "Well, it's the way things have always been done. Shouldn't we be devoting our time to other things?" No. We brought this bill forward, and now we're going to see it through to its conclusion.

Governments throughout North America are hearing about this, so we introduced this particular piece of legis-

lation. We had the benefit, during the past year, of making sure that the transactions that this particular legislation will catch are the transactions we want to catch—not every transaction, not a movement between a primary and a secondary seller where nobody's profiting, not a legitimate business transaction, not where there is no windfall profit, no captured block of income. We want to make sure that the transactions being caught, given technology, the quick movement and the relationships, are exactly the ones that we want to catch. We've had that last year, since the legislation was introduced, to make sure that we can work through some of the issues that were brought to our attention.

In essence, what is legislation? Legislation is, in legal terms, much the same as the business I was in before: It's software. It takes a little bit of time to test it. You've got to make sure it works. You've got to bring out your provisions and give people a chance to say, "Aha. I know how to break that." So we'll say, "Okay. That's what your beta test is for. Tell us how you would break it." When they come back and say, "The problem with your legislation is if you do this, this, this and that, you get around it," we say, "Great. That's what we really needed to know. Thank you very much." It gives us a chance to go back and make it better, to close those loopholes. It takes time to catch those loopholes, particularly when you're going to go where no legislation has gone before, and that's what this is doing.

Assuming this bill is passed in second reading, then it goes on to committee, which introduces some amendments to fine-tune a few of the provisions. In all the things that we've heard since the bill was introduced, when it goes into committee, we have a chance to test some of the other suggestions. For example, a movement of tickets from a primary to a secondary seller where it's for the convenience of the customer and not for profit is not going to be caught by this particular piece of legislation. This is something that the stakeholders said to us very clearly. They said that not every large-scale movement of a block of tickets necessarily represents industrial-scale scalping. Okay, fair enough. That was a reasonable suggestion, but people actually had to sit down and consider it in the context of the business that they're in.

Ticket scalping per se has been illegal in Ontario for some time. But when you started to see the sophistication of the Internet and the security of financial transactions over the Web, in or about the mid-1990s, by about 1998, we were actually seeing a fairly mature set of e-commerce protocols, and it became commercially viable to do e-commerce on a large scale. Certainly, when we moved into the 21st century, if you were operating using an Internet protocol using the Web as your interface, what you could do then is you could do almost a bait-and-switch. On one site, you could present a whole range of tickets and associated prices, and people would say, "As of such and such a date,"—let's suppose it's this date at midnight—"tickets go on sale."

So what have you got? You've got the devotees, fans, legions of fans of performers like Leonard Cohen or

Bruce Springsteen, or even of some classical music, where I now see blocks of tickets being offered on TicketsNow—you've got them sitting up at night saying, "Okay, midnight: 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1; log on." And all of a sudden, there really aren't the tickets there. In fact, if you want to buy those tickets, at about three seconds after 12, it's, "Go to TicketsNow." So you go to TicketsNow, and the \$95 ticket is \$295, and the \$149 ticket is \$395. Give me a break. You're telling me that everybody who wanted to buy tickets at their face value actually got a fair, legitimate chance to buy tickets on a level playing field? Nonsense; absolute nonsense. That's the sort of stuff that really, really annoys concertgoers, and that's what we're here to fix with this particular piece of legislation.

What this bill does is it aligns the Ticket Speculation Act with anti-scalping laws in other Canadian provinces and in the US states. We're not alone in doing this. If you listen to some of the naysayers—who, by the way, will stand up and vote for the bill anyway—they'll talk to you and say, "Oh, there are other things that we should be doing." However, other jurisdictions in North America have also introduced ticket speculation laws. Our government says to Ontario consumers, "We think you deserve the same protection. We think you should receive the same fair treatment as consumers in other jurisdictions." I think that's a pretty good use of my time in the Legislature this afternoon. Ontarians have expressed their concern about their ability to have fair access to events at a fair price.

I have a very good friend who lives in the state of Illinois who did a story on just this issue. He actually followed a gentleman who lined up and waited outside for a chance to buy tickets to a concert. He was number one in line when the box office opened. He thought, "Wow; I'm going to have a chance to get right close to the stage. I want to be able to actually feel that performer. I want to be able to experience that performance up close and personal." He thought, "I'm going to have my choice of any ticket that I want because I was first, number one in line." Then, when the box office opened, the only things that were available to him were the tickets up in the bleachers.

This was long before this particular act was introduced. I remember talking to my buddy from Illinois, and he was talking about this story that he had written for one of the papers in and around the Chicago area. He said, "There's something wrong with this. There has to be something that our governments can do."

I'm a legislator. I'm proud to stand up and say that I'm part of a government that feels the same way as those ticket buyers who have waited in the cold, be it in the United States or be it in any Canadian province, especially in the province that we call home, Ontario. People who line up to buy tickets and invest the time and the money in doing it, if they feel that by being high in the line—if they're one of the first few buyers, they should be able to have access to the best seats in the house. That's what this legislation is committed to doing and that's what I think is right and fair. That's why I think it is a good

investment of our time in the Legislature here on this midafternoon in November.

Ontarians have said very clearly that it is unacceptable to them to allow a business model in which a company has an incentive to withhold tickets from the primary market and redirect them to a wholly owned subsidiary at a far higher price through another related company. The Criminal Code has words for that. I find that entire practice to be disgusting and I don't support it.

Ontarians work hard for their money. They work hard for it even if they choose to spend it buying concert tickets. That's their choice. As a legislator, I respect that choice, and I respect the value of their money. I'm committed to making sure that Ontarians are not getting gouged.

That is what this bill is all about. This bill is about fairness. This bill is about good business practices. This bill is an excellent investment of time by this House. I plan to support it. I'm sure the other parties will support it too, and I urge its passage.

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: First of all, Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could direct the Chair to check the oxygen level in the room, because what are we doing here? Let the bells ring and the birds fly, we're talking about scalping in the province of Ontario. That's so important that it was introduced, what, 18 months ago? That's 18 months we've gone in the province of Ontario to debate and let those individuals pay the price, if they wanted to pay it.

If you don't want to pay the price, don't pay the price. Let's move on. We don't need to be standing here debating this. I can't believe that we're talking about this and how it's so important, and that's why individuals got elected—to come to Queen's Park to debate scalping tickets? I can see it now on the campaign brochures: "We fixed the ticket-scalping problem in Ontario." What a great thing to be able to say—just like banning the pit bulls. Haven't we got something more important? Or is this just another deflective tactic so the people of the province of Ontario can't talk about the real issues, the real concerns that are taking place out there—and that's what we should be debating.

This could have been brought in and folded into one of those omnibus bills as a small section. As mentioned time and time again, the size of the bill and how small it was—and quite frankly, the member did a good job. He was sent in with the marching orders to talk about the bill, to spend that 20 minutes on it. I don't see it as a huge factor in the riding or a huge issue in the province.

Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I would ask if the question can be put, and we could move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. David Zimmer: Let me put this hypothetical to my Tory friends opposite and NDP friends opposite. Supposing down at the Rogers stadium, there was a very, very famous and prominent conservative politician from

the United States who was speaking, Sarah Palin, and they advertised tickets to hear Sarah Palin and the tickets were \$100, and all the Tories from across the way and all the Tories throughout Ontario rushed to their computers and they rushed down to Ticketmaster to buy one of those \$100 Sarah Palin tickets—

Mr. Jeff Leal: And a free trip to Alaska.

Mr. David Zimmer: —and a free trip to Alaska if they bought a \$100 ticket—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Where they could see Russia from the porch.

Mr. David Zimmer: —where they could see Russia from her porch, and where they could speculate and daydream about successful Tories, if they could only listen to that speech and be inspired and learn something from Sarah Palin, the great conservative icon south of the border. And yet, Mr. O'Toole from across the way, Mr. Ouellette from across the way—I don't know about you, Gilles Bisson; I don't think you'd buy a ticket for \$100 for that—but you go to your computer and you go down to Ticketmaster, and guess what? All the tickets are gone, and Sarah Palin, in that great fundraising exercise, has said that they're now \$1,000 a ticket.

I say to my Tory friends opposite, this legislation may well be good for you, because you can get in and see Sarah Palin for 100 bucks. I don't know what you might learn for 100 bucks, but—

Interjection.

Mr. David Zimmer: And imagine how you'd feel if you dipped into your pockets, paid the \$1,000 a ticket, got there and then realized you were ripped off because you didn't learn anything. She couldn't tell you anything, and you've been dinged for \$1,000 when you could have got in for \$100.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: All of the loud tones over there really contribute nothing to the debate.

I think what's important is how little this bill actually does. A good example here is there is a variety of ticket resellers out there, including online markets such as TicketsNow, StubHub, craigslist, TicketNetwork, Razor-gator and dozens of others, including eBay. This bill will actually do nothing to correct that problem. In fact, the Competition Bureau of Canada and the competition bureau in the United States have both examined this issue and they have found no illegal activity occurring.

This bill does not fix the problem. If you look at somebody buying tickets today, for instance, on eBay, they could buy the tickets and pay, if they chose, an extraordinary price. But the big issue that's coming up in this new e-commerce world is that the tickets turn out to be a fraud; then you've got another problem. You seem to imply that you're fixing the problem and you're really not doing anything of the sort.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville, in his remarks, read carefully from the minister's prepared text that he gave him to read. I understand that. He will do dutifully what he's told, as he always does, because that's what he's here to do—to carry the weight of the cabinet

in debate. He does that regularly. I didn't say "effectively;" I said "regularly."

I guess the point here is that there is a case where there is real gouging of pricing. If you were to go down to the next Leafs game—there's a team that doesn't have any trouble selling tickets; they have trouble winning games. But if you actually went down there—and the scalpers on the street were probably selling them for a season's ticket holder, not Ticketmaster. This does not fix that problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My first comment is, my God, don't make fun of my Leafs, because we know they're a great hockey club, and sometime next century we will win the cup. I have confidence that that will happen. I've got to say, imagine if we actually—I'm actually a Montreal fan, I have to avow. But anyway, the Leafs or Canadiens, I'd vote for them anyway.

First of all, I just have to say, imagine if we were really opposed to this bill and imagine if it was really substantive. Then I would understand why we're into almost some seven hours of debate on this particular bill; I would understand that. But here is a bill that all members of the House are going to vote for, and the government is filibustering their own bill. The government is doing everything they can to keep the ball bouncing on this bill in the House so they can kill time. Why? They really don't have an agenda in this last year of government. They're trying to basically lowball everything that happens in this place in order to duck the bullets that they set for themselves when it comes to all kinds of other initiatives that people are hopping mad about.

What are people mad about? They're mad about the HST. You saw it this morning when the price of gas went up yet again. The price of gas was over \$1.10 per litre, on which we now pay additional taxes. Imagine that; we're paying a tax on a tax because of Dalton McGuinty when it comes to gas. Every time the price of gas goes up, you pay more HST. People are reminded daily about their excursions on the HST and the Dalton McGuinty government. Imagine when they open their hydro bills—same thing.

I just say to the members across the way that it's interesting that they're filibustering their own bill.

My good friend—I don't know the riding.

Mr. David Zimmer: Willowdale.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Willowdale—makes comments in regard to Sarah Palin. Listen, you can scalp her tickets, you can give them away or you can give me a hundred bucks. There's no way that I would go to the Sarah Palin anything. But if I think that they've been sold out and that there are no tickets for the Conservatives, it's because all the new Conservatives in Ontario, who are called Liberals, have run to the CNE to watch her.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: You've got to come to the conclusion from the comments from the members from Oshawa and Durham that the Conservatives don't get it.

They think that once you introduce a bill, you know everything there is to know about what the bill covers and how people will react and what will happen when its measures are enacted—and you don't. When you introduce a bill, what you're there to do is listen, particularly when you're trying to break new ground and to do something with a bill that has never been done before. That's the case with this legislation. Conservatives think you're on your own.

They may feel the same way about health care, and they may feel the same way about post-secondary institutions for all that we know, but one thing we do know on this side is that you're not on your own. You've got a partner in your government, and no problem, big or small, no irritant, is insufficiently serious that we can't devote some time to it. This is a systemic problem that you can't solve on your own. You need to have your government here to give you a hand.

But the member from Willowdale gets it. He knows that this piece of legislation is about protecting people who need their elected representatives to speak for them and to do something for them that they're simply not able to do for themselves, and that's what we're going to do.

1520

The member from Durham says that the Competition Bureau saw no illegal activity, but the market knows that they've been scalped, scammed, ripped off, gouged. What this bill is about is making sure that what are irresponsible business practices become illegal.

My good friend the member from Timmins—James Bay doubts the government's agenda, and I say to him, fasten your seat belt in the next few months, because we're people who have come to build Ontario's future and we're going to use the tools of a responsible, representative democracy to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to be able to rise today and speak for a few minutes on Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act.

I originally got involved in this bill when I took over the critic portfolio for the Attorney General while the member from Whitby—Ajax was running as part of the leadership—and I had a few meetings on this. I suspected at the time that the bill would be brought forward fairly quickly, and I didn't realize it would be 18 months later before we actually started to debate it in the House. From listening to the comments today, I guess there's some urgency now to have the legislation pass, but certainly we haven't seen it in 18 months.

It will be interesting to see two things: one, how the bill is policed and who is actually going to police the outcome of this; and second of all, how soon it will actually be proclaimed and become law if it's passed.

We've heard today that the bill will likely be passed. Then I guess we're going to pass to second reading debate, and I'm assuming there will be committee hearings. This looks like there's so much interest in this bill that we're probably going to see this bill travelled. We've talked about a lot of other bills travelling and nothing

ever happens, but maybe this time we'll see the bill go to the people of Kenora or Timmins or the Soo, where this is a huge issue. You can imagine how many people—the phones are ringing off the walls in the MPPs' offices in Manitoulin, North Bay and Huntsville.

In my constituency office, we've never had a call on this. I suppose there is a problem. I've bought tickets myself from Ticketmaster. I thought I was treated fairly. I did pay more money, but I expected to pay more money because they were providing a service. I felt that I've seen some excellent concerts. The concerts were held in the city of Toronto and sometimes in Copps Coliseum and the smaller venues like the Barrie Molson Centre. Certainly it hasn't been an issue, from my perspective, in my riding.

One of my favourite rock stars is Bruce Springsteen—and he brought it to our attention. I guess there are a lot of Bruce Springsteen fans over there. They've probably bought all his albums, and they probably are wanting to make sure they keep Bruce Springsteen happy so he'll come back and do future concerts.

I represent the riding of Simcoe North, one of the key ridings in Simcoe county, and I'm very, very proud of it. The people in Simcoe county are not talking about the Ticketmaster legislation. They're talking about the construction of the Royal Victoria Hospital and how we're building this hospital and whether or not there will be funding there to operate the new facility. We still have beds closed in the original section. They're worried about things like the Simcoe county growth plan. That's a key area.

The minister stood up the other day in the House and answered a question from the member from Barrie on the Simcoe county growth plan. I understand they've got amendments to the Simcoe county growth vision. The amendments are due and they want this all cleaned up by January 31, and I'm begging the Minister of Infrastructure not to have that happen. We need at least a six- or eight-month delay on those amendments being brought forward, because we've got all these new members of council in all the municipalities around the county of Simcoe and they're not up to speed at all on the Simcoe county growth plan. Making amendments, at this stage, to move forward is a terrible mistake. I'm asking the government members to talk to their minister. We're going to bring it up in the House more. We'll get more of the municipalities involved. But we do have a lot of new mayors, deputy mayors and council members right across the county of Simcoe who are really concerned about their future and what the impact is on the Places to Grow legislation and the amendments that they apparently have brought forward, which they want to clean up by the 31st of January.

There are a lot of other things too. We worry about the economy. We worry about the loss of jobs. We worry about the transportation system. I think there are so many more things we could be debating in this Legislature than the Ticketmaster legislation. To think that we'll spend a whole afternoon here, and apparently we're going to continue to debate it for God only knows how long—

Mr. John O'Toole: A couple more days.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —a few more days before it even gets brought up. I don't know why.

We feel that we'll probably support this in the end. Then it will be interesting to see how far we move forward. But I think there are so many more issues that we could be debating.

I hope we can spend the same kind of emphasis debating the economic plan that the minister is supposed to deliver on Thursday afternoon. I hope that there are many afternoons to debate the fall economic statement, that we're not going to bring that to closure very quickly. Usually, on these types of bills, by now, the government is out there time-allocating the bill. That's very unfair when that happens. However, it doesn't appear to be the case with this one.

As a member of the PC caucus, it's interesting to watch this. However, I think the big picture is that this likely will be supported. Let's get on and debate some more important issues that the people of the city of Toronto and counties like Simcoe and Muskoka—some of the concerns we're facing in all those different areas.

I see that the Minister of Education is here today. Just to say to her right up front: We had a call today from one of my newly elected trustees, and she's very, very concerned about the direction the board is going with the closing of rural schools. There's a whole pile of schools they want to close across the county of Simcoe. There's going to be an outcry among the general public because these are the hubs of their communities. These are the kinds of things we need to be debating here, not whether people pay too much to go to a Bruce Springsteen concert. They didn't have to pay that money. They didn't have to pay it.

In the end, we will pass this bill. The government will try to make some kind of a method of policing it and proclaiming it, but, in the end, it doesn't really mean a heck of a lot when you consider all the other issues that we're facing in the province.

I look forward to continuing this debate. Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Simcoe North certainly, I'm sure, had more to say on this bill—at least I was hoping he did.

I would say that what is actually happening here—to the people of Ontario, I'm talking to you quite sincerely now—in the short time that the member from Simcoe North took to speak on this, he made the point very clearly. It was quite simply stated by saying that the process today has been looked at both federally and in the United States with respect to the legality and the Competition Bureau's position. This bill does nothing to stop what we would call “the street merchants” that scalp tickets.

If people don't want to attend the hockey game, the basketball game, the World Series, or whatever it is—or some rock concert, for that matter—they simply should not participate. They can probably catch a video of it or

some other media report on it. But if they're so desirable and they're in town only for one night and they weren't aware, they may want to pay the premium price. These decisions are made by individuals.

Premier McGuinty's government is always trying to ban things. It seems to be their ultimate solution all the time. Whether it's hamburgers in schools or chocolate bars or whatever it is, they seem to have these one-size-fits-all solutions. They're so contrary to human behaviour that this bill is one more example of saying one thing but not actually delivering, because this bill does not do what it purports to do. It will not stop the scalping of tickets. It will not stop people buying counterfeit tickets on eBay. And who's going to enforce it? This is another example of a government that has lots of ideas but no ability to deliver.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: There are some things that, as a government, we are trying to ban. We're trying to ban bad business practices. This is a bad, bad business practice. It's rotten to the core. What the member is basically saying is, "At the moment the law says that there's nothing wrong with that." If you want to pay \$300 for a ticket that has a face value of \$75, that's actually just fine by him.

But it's not fine by me and it's not fine by our government and it's not fine by the people who don't want to pay \$300 for a \$75 concert or entertainment ticket. We think it's wrong, so we're going to make the law that makes it illegal. We're going to make it possible for the Competition Bureau to say, "You're doing something wrong, and we can shut you down." That's what we think should be banned.

We think that other things should be banned as well. Generally, we've been getting rid of smoking. We think that's worth banning. We think that wholesale scalping, on an industrial, computerized scale, of concert tickets is a social wrong, and we're trying to ban it.

If you want to build a business model based upon being able to flip an entire block of tickets while adding no value to the performer, no value to the exhibitor and no value for the people who do the work in setting up and taking down, in taking tickets and in cleaning up, we think that's wrong. If your business model is, "Let us set up a wholly owned subsidiary, flip the tickets, take the money and run"—I realize that's the kind of business that the member for Durham may be advocating, but I'm not advocating that. Our government stands against that, and we consider that the accumulated savings of teenagers and 20-somethings who would like to spend their money fairly on a reasonably priced ticket for a concert deserve that very opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, we get it. We understand. I said, "Madam Speaker, call the question." We have no problem moving forward with it. We want it to

go to committee and have it go province-wide, if need be, to get this message out there.

One of the big questions here is, what's playing at the GM Centre in Oshawa? That's what we're going to talk about. Great Big Sea, Jeff Dunham, Winter Dreams on Ice, Canadian world juniors exhibition game, Disney Live! Mickey's Rockin' Road Show, Grand Slam of Curling and Cirque du Soleil are coming up at the GM Centre in Oshawa. I would invite all those watching across the province to check the GM Centre in Oshawa's website.

As well, at the Regent Theatre in Oshawa, we have the Ontario Philharmonic, which is doing a great job out there. I would invite all those watching today to check the website for the Regent Theatre in Oshawa. Lighthouse is playing, as well as the Irish Rovers.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: They're still around?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, they're still around.

As a matter of fact, at the Oshawa Little Theatre—and you'd be happy to check their website, Madam Speaker—The King and I, The Sound of Music and Play On!, and a number of other shows are taking place in our communities.

As I've said before, we should call the question and move forward, as I think everybody is in support of this debate. I don't know of people who are opposed to it, but we should move forward on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am so excited to have these two minutes to speak to this most important bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Like the member from Timmins—James Bay, I'm kind of bored stiff with this already.

Look, I think I made it clear: We support this bill. We're going to go along with it. Obviously, we're worried about how it's going to be implemented, how it's going to be policed, and when the government will actually proclaim it, because it took 18 months to get it to here, so it could be another 18 or 20 months before we actually see it proclaimed as legislation.

I think that when you look at the state of the economy, when you look at the job losses we've got across this province—I talk to contractors day in and day out; I talked to a number of people on the weekend at some events I was at—they're having a very, very difficult time. One contractor I was talking with had 70 employees last year, down to 40 this year. He doesn't know how many people he's going to keep on after January 1. These are the kinds of issues I think we should be debating in the Legislature, the issues we face that are front-line spending, front-line issues in all the different ridings across the province.

It's good that Bruce Springsteen brought this to our attention. We're going to deal with it over the next few months, I guess, but I think there are so many more

important issues that could be debated. We could start here this afternoon if they wanted to bring something forward to debate or move forward with. But I can tell you that in my riding this is not even a slight priority. There are so many things—health care, education, transportation systems and the state of the economy—that are far more important than this. People are talking to me every day about their hydro bills. They've cut back and cut back on their consumption, but their bills are still higher than ever. Those are the kinds of things that people want answers from this Legislature on. I feel for the member from Mississauga, the spokesperson on this bill, who seems to be a real advocate for this legislation. It may be important in his riding, but in my riding the state of the economy is the number one issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate. The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Oh, I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, I—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I was slow getting up because I was really hoping that nobody was going to get up and that we were actually going to get to a vote on this bill, because as has been said by everybody in this debate, we are in favour of the legislation. It is a half-page wonder that the government has put forward. The explanation notes in the bill are longer than the actual legislation, so motherhood and apple pie.

It's a bill that, as has been pointed out by Mr. O'Toole, the member for Durham—and I think he's right—is going to do nothing to stop scalping. Do you think scalpers are no longer going to stand in front of Maple Leaf Gardens at the next hockey game when this bill comes forward and is finally passed? There are still going to be scalpers in front of Maple Leaf Gardens. Do you think they're not going to be scalping tickets in front of the Blue Jays games and out in front of various concerts across this province? Absolutely. This bill in a very limited way deals with scalping, but only one part of it. So at the end of the day this is much ado about nothing, because the government wants to stay away from the real issues that affect people every day.

That's the reason I am now going to get up, because I think there are far more important things we can be dealing with than a scalping bill. For example, people are now getting their hydro bills across Ontario, and those hydro bills that come in are getting larger and larger every day. Why? Because this government has done all kinds of things in order to push the price of hydro up for both businesses and individuals in this province, to the point that it's hampering business investment in this province. It's actually closed the Xstrata smelter-refinery in the city of Timmins, putting over a thousand people out of work. As a result of initiatives such as the HST and the hydro policies of this government, people are getting hydro bills that they can ill afford to pay. So are people really interested in the Ticket Speculation Act in ridings like Timmins–James Bay? I think what people are worried about is, "What's happening to my hydro bill? Why is it that I am paying more and more money for a

basic essential service such as electricity?" Rather than dealing with that, the government says, "Let's deal with ticket speculation." I listened today to the minister talk and say, "Oh, the NDP are against this wonderful initiative around smart meters and about how we're leading the world in new technologies and how wonderful this is and what this is going to do for conservation." Conservation, my eye. I can't change when I'm going to heat my house in the middle of winter. I can't change when I'm going to cook my meals when I come off work. You can't change most of what people have to say on ticket speculation—

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: While I always enjoy listening to my colleague the member from Timmins–James Bay, I am having a slight bit of difficulty relating ticket speculation and smart meters. A discussion of smart meters is always appropriate with the right bill, but I'm not sure it's connected to this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I will just remind the member that we are debating Bill 172.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I agree. People feel they're getting scalped every day when they get their hydro bill. That's my point, and that's how it relates to ticket speculation. This whole bill should have been rewritten in order to protect the public of Ontario from the real scalpers in this world; that is, the Dalton McGuinty cabinet and his government, which have been scalping the people of Ontario when it comes to the hydro bills that they're getting. We all know that this scalping initiative called the smart meters at the end of the day is doing very little, if anything, to deal with conservation. The scalping that happens on your hydro bill as it relates to this act is that you cannot change most of the activities you have during the course of a day and the course of a week as a result of these smart meters. When are you going to stop heating your house in the middle of January? When are you going to stop washing your clothes? When are you going to stop cooking meals? When are students going to turn off the lights so they can study in the dark? There are things you can't do.

1540

So yeah, people are being scalped. I guess this bill is dealing with a form of scalpatation, as they would call it, because clearly people are being scalpatated by this government on a daily basis—these are great verbs I'm coming up with—scalpatated by this government when it comes to what they've done under hydro.

Ticket speculation? I want to talk to the people who are in, let's say, a riding somewhere in Ottawa, who are walking around the city of Ottawa today, buying things in the markets and in the stores of Ottawa or going into the service station to fill up with gas or get their car fixed. Those people I'm sure are all talking about the scalpatation bill that's in the House right now called the Ticket Speculation Act.

They're talking about how they're being scalped by the HST, about how every day the HST is reaching into people's pockets and pulling money out of their wallets

that they can ill afford to spend, because this government has decided that ticket speculation is more important than trying to deal with the costs that people are having to pay with increased taxes through the HST.

At least Gordon Campbell got it right. At least Gordon Campbell understood. "Oops, I did make a mistake in my government. I am not going to be re-elected in the next election," says Gordon Campbell, so he takes a walk, hoping somebody else can come on and give a new face to that Liberal government.

I'm beginning to think it's too late for my friend Mr. Dalton McGuinty, whom I have a lot of respect for. After all, he is the author of the ticket scalping act—the Ticket Speculation Act, I should say. He is bringing this very important initiative before this House. It's something that I know everybody in his riding and my riding are extremely excited about and are walking out—as a matter of fact, I can see them now. They're building the floats, decorating the floats. The marching bands are lining up in order to have a parade in every community across Ontario about ticket speculation, about how horrible this is and how happy they are that the government has come forward with this act.

Well, they're not. They're putting the floats together all right. They're getting the banners ready. They're putting the signs and getting them painted too, because they're getting ready for the next election when people are going to have a say when it comes to scalping in this province, when they're going to have a say about who scalped whom when it came to the HST and who scalped whom when it came to extra taxes they have to pay, who scalped whom when it came to hydro bills. They're going to have that decision come next October, in the next provincial election.

So ticket speculation? Obviously I love talking about the Ticket Speculation Act. I think it's the greatest act that ever came from this government. This government is just absolutely amazing and breathtaking in the width and scope of what this act does for the people in Attawapiskat.

Today I raised in the House the situation where 90 families are living inside what's called a contractor's trailer. Those are small rooms, 10 feet by 10 feet with families of four and five people per room, four toilet bowls for the 90 families, four showers for the 90 families, four stoves for the 90 families to cook their meals. Are they worried about ticket speculation? God, they'd love to be able to go to a concert in order to change their mind from the suffering that they have to live with every day in these conditions. "Well, we've got something," says Mr. Bentley, the minister responsible about ticket speculation, "But we're not going to do nothing when it comes to those folks in Attawapiskat who are having to live in very cramped quarters in a structure that doesn't even have a fire alarm."

You'd think this government would have learned as a result of the fire inquiry where you had two men die in a jailhouse in Kashechewan as a result of not having a fire alarm, of not having fire detection systems, of not having fire suppression systems, of not being able to have

adequate measures to evacuate people out of what was supposed to be a jail that wasn't even certified as a jail.

Ticket speculation? The people of Attawapiskat who live in this contractor's trailer, the 90 families that are there, oh, they're really concerned about ticket speculation. I was there last Wednesday or Thursday, whatever day it was, and they all came to me, everybody in the community in Attawapiskat. When I sat down with Theresa Spence, the chief, and the various members of the council and elders who were there, boy, they must have raised ticket speculation 20 times in the time I was there, because I'm sure they weren't interested in talking about the overcrowding of the folks who are living in houses that are substandard; of a school that has yet to be built in that community because of the indifference of the federal and provincial governments; about unemployment at 95%, 97%; or about poverty that strikes you in the face every time you walk into Attawapiskat or any First Nation community.

Ticket speculation? Oh yeah, it was real high on the list of priorities on the part of the people of Attawapiskat when I spoke to them last Wednesday, so much so that they sent me down here and said, "Gilles, whatever you do when you go to the Legislature next week, make sure to get up, Gilles, and speak on ticket speculation, because we in Attawapiskat, boy, oh boy, that's a real big issue. Certainly, the government has got really pressing things to do with ticket scalping as compared to what needs to be done when it comes to the overcrowding of the houses in Attawapiskat."

Today, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said, "Oh, well, we can't interfere because that's a federal responsibility. God, if we interfere, it may provide a level standard for all First Nations communities of us jumping in." The federal government is missing in action; you know it, I know it, everybody here knows it. The federal government doesn't care about ticket scalping. Do you think the federal government gives two hoots about that? I don't see any legislation federally about it. But I can tell you, they certainly don't care about the state of people living in First Nations communities. You just have to go into those communities to find out. When you've got 20 and 25 people living in a house that is overcrowded, that is full of mould in most cases; when you've got schools in most of the communities that are unable to operate because of mould, such as what's happening at Fort Severn, what's happening in Attawapiskat and others; when you've got water systems that are brand new, as they are in Attawapiskat, and they're not even sending people to do the testing of the water—can you imagine that? Ticket speculation? My God.

You've got Attawapiskat, a brand new water plant that was built with federal-provincial dollars not more than about six to 10 years ago, and the federal government—because the guy who did the testing retired, they haven't sent anybody into the community to test the water out of the water plant. Walkerton?

What happened in this province? Where is our provincial government to make sure that the federal government is held to account? Yeah, I understand that it's a

federal responsibility, I understand that the federal government has a responsibility towards First Nations, but we all understand here that the federal government is missing in action. They don't give two hoots; they never gave two hoots 100 years ago and they won't give two hoots 100 years from now. All I know is it's getting worse instead of getting better, sometimes.

Ticket Speculation Act? I can tell you that the good people of Timmins–James Bay are not too interested in the Ticket Speculation Act. There may be one or two people who may have heard about this and have a fleeting interest in the bill, but people want real issues addressed by their government. All I know is, I look at Attawapiskat as one example where you've got water that's not being tested in a water plant, so that you are playing Russian roulette every time you open up your tap, and a province of Ontario that has the best standards in North America when it comes to testing water; let's give ourselves credit. This Legislature, first under the Conservative government, then under the Liberal government and under the NDP before that, has built the toughest water standards in North America. We should be proud of that as members of this assembly and we should all take a pat on the back. I think Mr. Harris needs to take a pat on the back when it comes to what happened with Walkerton—not with what happened as far as the deaths, but what came out of Walkerton, and Mr. Eves and Mr. McGuinty and, prior to that, Mr. Rae.

Why is it that we're not applying these standards to the people living in Ontario who happen to be First Nations living on-reserve? Can't we hold the federal government accountable to a standard that every other municipality and everybody else has to live up to? Ticket speculation? It's speculation every time you take water out of a water system in a First Nations community.

All of us last week went to Remembrance Day ceremonies around our ridings. All of us had an opportunity to honour those who served and gave to this country as they did in the previous wars and they do today in Afghanistan. I was at all of those Legions, along with all of you in your ridings, as you went to the various ceremonies. I want to ask you: How many First Nations veterans asked us about ticket speculation? Not one. What did they talk about? They talked about the need to get better benefits, yes, from their federal government, in order to provide the right amount of benefit for them in their retirement, to make sure that their health care needs are taken care of and others. They worry about their children and their grandchildren being able to afford to go to school and get post-secondary education.

1550

I can tell you what they've talked to me about in Hearst and Constance Lake and Fauquier and Kapuskasing and Timmins as I attended various services there on November 11 and before. They talked about this latest initiative that the government had—not ticket speculation, but the government has decided it's going to pay the tuition of a number of Chinese students who are foreign students coming into Ontario. The folks that I talked to,

and I imagine you heard the same thing as you went around your riding, said, "I can't afford to send my child to university. My kid has got to go to work because we as parents can't afford to put our child through university." They didn't say to us, "Oh, but you know, Gilles, whatever you do, when you go to the Legislature next week, make sure to speak about ticket speculation. Make sure that we hold those people who scalp tickets accountable."

No, no. That's not what they talked to me about. They said to me, "Go to the Legislature of Ontario and tell Dalton McGuinty, bravo that we're trying to attract foreign students into Ontario—that's not a bad idea—but why not give the same deal to Ontario students who are working hard in order to go to university and college and get the degrees and diplomas that they want so they can go into the workplaces of Ontario and build the economy into the future and become the leaders of tomorrow?" That's what people wanted me to come to this Legislature to speak about. They didn't want me to come here and speak about the Ticket Speculation Act.

I tell you, most people in my riding love a hockey game—absolutely. And most people in my riding—it's probably a bit of a split: Montreal, Toronto and the Sens. Somewhere in there lies the allegiance of the people of Timmins–James Bay. I avow, I'm a Montreal Habs fan. I have been all my life and probably will be, and I know there are others here. But I can tell you, they weren't concerned about ticket speculation. They'd love to be able to afford the gas to drive the car to get to Ottawa, to get to Montreal and to get to Toronto to watch a hockey game. Once they are there, they'll buy the ticket. God, they'll go buy it off the scalper on the street. I've seen them do it before.

I can tell you a story about my father and I, who were down here some years ago when my dad was still alive: St. Louis–Toronto in the finals, and we couldn't get a ticket at the door. We got a ticket from a scalper for less than two thirds the price you would have paid at the door. We thought it was a great deal. We went in and watched St. Louis, unfortunately, beat Toronto, but in three periods of overtime.

So people in my riding, on ticket speculation, say, "Listen, if I can afford the gas to drive the car to go to Toronto, if I can afford to pay the GST on the hotel room that I have to pay when I'm down here, if I can afford to keep the lights on in my house in the wintertime and be able to save a little bit of money on my hydro bill, I can afford to go watch a hockey game and watch Montreal or Toronto or the Sens."

Ticket speculation: a really important bill. I don't for one minute say it is a bad idea. I'll vote for it. But I've got to tell you, using the legislative time that we have in the way that this government has pushed forward this bill to talk strictly about ticket speculation when we could be talking about the issues that face every person in our communities across this province on a daily basis—they want to have a job. They want to know that that job they do have is secure. They want the ability to send their kids

to post-secondary education. They want to know that if they get sick, they are not going to have to have a supplemental health plan in order to provide health services for themselves, to know that when mom and dad are failing, there is somebody in the home care system to take care of them and they don't have to fight with the system, as we all do on a regular basis in our constituency offices, trying to represent the people in our riding to get the services they should have in a community, but instead, what do we do? We send them into long-term-care facilities, where we spend far more money.

Ticket speculation? Yes, I'll talk about ticket speculation—because that's what the people of Timmins–James Bay want me to do, is to come here and not talk about ticket speculation, but to talk about those issues that are important to them.

So I say to the government, because I know they're going to get up and say, "This is really ironic. Mr. Bisson got up, the member from Timmins–James Bay, and said we're wasting our time, and he took 20 minutes to speak on ticket speculation"—I want to put on the record that I am taking 20 minutes to not speak about ticket speculation, to use ticket speculation as an opportunity to raise the issues that are important to the people of Timmins–James Bay and, I would argue, important to the people in your riding.

Every now and then, governments do things right, and every government of every stripe will bring laws to the House that the opposition parties will be able to support. But when those opportunities come, let's move on and let's deal with those other issues that are maybe a little bit more pressing and maybe a little bit more difficult to get consensus on and, yes, may cause some real debate in this House, so that we're able to find some solutions to the problems that people face every day in their lives as they go around the province of Ontario trying to go on with their daily lives.

Madam Speaker, I hope that you enjoyed my debate on ticket speculation. I hope you now clearly understand what my position is. My position is, bring the vote on. We'll vote on it, and I will use this debate to speak about all those other issues that are so important to the people I represent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's kind of ironic that the member from Timmins–James Bay said he didn't want to debate ticket speculation, yet he stood up here for 20 minutes taking up time to tell us all his views about ticket speculation. I find it passing strange.

Anyway, I think the key part of this bill that really irritates people—and I think this has to be eliminated—is that it's not so much the scalpers you meet at the front doors of the Air Canada place, whatever, but it's these brokers and intermediary companies that are set up to basically scam people on a massive scale.

What happens is the primary seller—that would be the entertainment entity that sells tickets to a concert—will

hold tickets back at a lower price. They might hold back 5,000 tickets. Then what they'll do is pass those 5,000 tickets on to an inside broker or secondary seller, and they'll hawk those tickets at an inflated price, sometimes 50%, 100% or 200% more than you would have paid for that ticket if it was sold by the primary ticket vendor. This is one of the appalling things that happens. It's an attempt to deal with that. It's almost a form of corporate-type scalping.

This is the type of legislation that is also found in other jurisdictions in Canada and in the United States. People have asked that this unfair practice be dealt with. It is not something that we should tolerate. We're never going to wipe out all speculation, but at least—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Oshawa.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd like to comment about my colleague from Timmins–James Bay. I have some concerns about the member. First of all, I think he's probably scalphobic. Not only that, he's a Habs fan.

Look, we get it. The members in the chamber here were elected to do a job. All of us, I would imagine, spent last week doing Remembrance Day services. Quite frankly, Ralph Bice who was blown up at Dieppe, or Joe Hart who served in theatre in Italy, or my grandfather who fought in the Russian Revolution and then fought against the Germans in World War I, or my great-uncle who was a machine gunner in World War II, made sacrifices on behalf of the entire country—to come forward and make changes in our community. If I asked every one of those individuals about their concern with ticket pricing, especially when all parties are saying, "Let's move forward and call the vote," I think they would question what's happening.

I think we need to move forward on this on behalf of those individuals who we represent in each one of our ridings. We try to make a difference in the province, and if this makes a small difference, yes. And if there's opposition to it, I can understand why there would be immense debate over it—but I don't see any. I don't see that the members in this room are opposed to what's taking place here or have a strong concern or don't get the message. Yes, there are people abusing the system. There are people abusing the system everywhere. We need to move forward, and that's what we need to do on behalf of the constituents we represent in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Speaker. I'm just going to take two minutes or maybe a little less than what has been allocated. Each time a member gets up to speak to the bill, it means we're going to spend a little extra time before we actually get to the vote. I'm with the member from Oshawa. Once all those who want an opportunity to speak have had that opportunity, I'll be ready to vote too, but I'm not necessarily prepared to deny them that opportunity to make their voices heard. The member from Timmins–James Bay used his time effectively. You notice there was no one on this side who

stood up and asked you on a point of order to call him to order if it was appropriate. He did mention ticket speculation on a frequent basis, although his speech had little to do with that. But it did give him a forum to talk about what's particularly important to him this first week back after Remembrance Day.

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If I could capture in a word—and I don't want to put words in his mouth—the word he might have used in the context of how he feels about the ticket speculation legislation, he might have said “phooey.” I'm not sure he's going to use that word or some other word, but that would probably at least capture it for him.

On the legislation, it's an unacceptable business practice to have companies redirecting thousands or tens of thousands of tickets to a company that they have a direct relationship with, and may very well own, and double and triple the price. That's just not legitimate or fair and, frankly, it shouldn't be a legal practice. We have to bring that to a stop in the interests of Ontarians.

Ontarians work hard for their money, and they don't want to be gouged when they use their money for entertainment, sports or cultural activities. This legislation will be one piece in ensuring that that gouging doesn't occur, where thousands of tickets are moved away from the primary seller to a secondary seller with a direct business relationship, where a fair price, the first price, now becomes an inflated price of two and three times that amount. This is not a hard concept—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

The member from Timmins—James Bay has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank those members who commented on my presentation on ticket speculation and about how it demonstrated that many people in my constituency would rather see the time in this assembly used to speak to issues that are more pressing to them than ticket speculation—not that ticket speculation is not important; I understand that. But I think people in my constituency, as in everybody else's constituency, have larger issues in mind with regard to what's happening with their job and what's going on in the economy: “Am I going to be able to send my kids to college? Will I be able to afford university?” Those are the kinds of issues that I think are on the minds of people, and those are the issues that I think we should be trying to deal with in this Legislature more effectively.

One comment I'll make in passing; I just think it's a bit strange. Here we are. We time-allocate bills on which we really should have debate, things that are very weighty. For example, when the government had its HST bill, the government used time allocation in order to close debate on the HST. The government said, “There's no time to talk; the decision has been made.” They limited the time that we had in committee by way of that time allocation motion and then limited the time that we had in third reading. Here we are with ticket speculation, speaking until the cows come home. We're having to sort

of kill time in this Legislature when I think there are other bills that probably could have used more time.

Would the government have gotten its HST bill in the end? Probably, because they hold the majority. But at least the public would have felt, if you didn't have time allocation on that bill, able to speak to the issues that pressed people and that people were concerned about when it came to the HST—and especially have the ability to travel that bill by committee to various communities. If it hadn't been for time allocation, we might have been able to do that.

To the members across the way, it's interesting how you use time allocation. We time-allocate those bills that are really worth talking about and we—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a delight to have an opportunity to get some comments on the record. Bill 172 is a historic piece of legislation to amend the Ticket Speculation Act in the province of Ontario.

Before I get into my more formal remarks, I would like to take the opportunity to thank my good friend Mr. Fred Rathburn, who is president of Branch 52 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Peterborough, which did such a fantastic job last Thursday organizing the Remembrance Day service in Peterborough. Certainly, the new veterans' wall of honour that has been constructed in Peterborough—the Ontario government provided some \$100,000 to make that a reality to honour veterans from World War I, World War II and the Korean War. I encourage all members in this House to take the opportunity to visit that. It is quite a unique memorial, designed after the Vietnam memorial in Washington, DC. It is quite a special place.

I also thank Jim Marsden, who is the president of the Legion in Lakefield, Ontario, for his splendid hospitality and a veterans' lunch which he hosted last Thursday.

I've got to get on to Bill 172 here. I'm glad my friend the member from Oshawa is here today. There might have been some ticket speculation at General Motors Centre last Sunday, just yesterday. The Peterborough Petes were playing in Oshawa on Sunday night, and we lost 3-2 to the Oshawa Generals, but I—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I've hit a sore point over there with the member from Durham and the member from Oshawa, but let me keep going.

We were very concerned; unfortunately, it was the seventh straight loss for the Peterborough Petes. But I want to put this loss in Oshawa in context because there could have been some speculators out in front of the GM Centre, good folks coming up from Peterborough, ticket speculators, to get a ticket to see the Oshawa Generals play the Peterborough Petes. I'm told through newspaper reports that the Petes suffered two bad bounces resulting in two goals to the Oshawa Generals, so that's why we lost 3-2. But I'm quite confident that the prospects for the Petes will improve this Thursday night.

Madam Speaker, you're leaving momentarily and the member from Kitchener—Conestoga is assuming the chair

here. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. The Speaker, I know, is an outstanding educator and had a very distinguished career in Kitchener-Conestoga before she joined us here in the House after the 2007 election: certainly a loss to the education community in Kitchener, but a real positive gain to the Ontario Legislature.

But I've got to get on here with Bill 172. We did introduce—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Sarnia is heckling me here a bit, so I'd better get to the prepared notes that I have here on this bill.

This bill was introduced with some urgency back on April 29, 2009, and the legislation would, if passed, help to ensure that Ontario consumers have fair access to tickets to their favourite concerts, sporting events and theatrical performances.

While I'm on my feet, I think I can do a little paid political announcement. In November and December at Showplace Peterborough—some of you have been to Peterborough to attend events at Showplace Peterborough. John McDermott will be there at the end of November and the first part of December; Michael Burgess will also be there—two fine entertainers, and I know the tickets at Showplace Peterborough are well priced, but in case—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Sarnia is concerned about those ticket prices at Showplace Peterborough, and I'm concerned too. If the member from Sarnia happened to be in Peterborough that night to see the John McDermott concert at the end of November, I want to make sure that the member from Sarnia and his lovely wife would buy those tickets at a fair price. I would not want the member from Sarnia and his wife to pay prices above what they should be paying to see John McDermott.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to go as your guest.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The member from Sarnia suggests he wants to go as my guest, but I know the member from Sarnia's background, and he did well in the private sector, so he could come to Peterborough and probably pick up my ticket and a ticket for my wife, Karan, and then we could go out and perhaps have an enjoyable dinner in Peterborough. I could name a couple of restaurants, but I don't want to get into trouble. We could have a wonderful evening. The bottom line is, we wouldn't want the member from Sarnia to pay prices beyond what the market would dictate.

We all know that Ontarians work hard each and every day; they work to support their families and they support our economy. Safeguarding consumer protection is vital during a time when every dollar counts.

Talking about how every dollar counts, I know the member from Oshawa would be very pleased—I just read recently that 600 workers will be back at General Motors in Oshawa on the flex assembly line, I think, building the Chevrolet Equinox that is being built both in Oshawa and in Ingersoll. I know that impacts some of my constituents in Peterborough because General Motors makes up about 25% of the local economy in Peter-

borough between retirees, active workers and the supply manufacturers that provide parts to build the Camaro, the Equinox and the Chev Impala.

1610

So we're very dependant on the success of General Motors in Peterborough, and that's why I was so supportive when we had to make a very difficult decision to put \$4 billion on the table to assist General Motors in their restructuring, but it is paying dividends. I understand that later this month the IPO will be offered. For my good friend from Durham, who had a very distinguished career at General Motors, I know he is one member who will be taking up that stock opportunity and he will be enhancing his portfolio by buying General Motors stock because as former senior management there, he has confidence in the new General Motors and he will be buying some of that stock.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now that I've left, the stock has gone down.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Getting back to this bill, it's a very important bill, and we're hoping the opposition will not be obstructionist when it comes to getting this bill to committee in the not-too-distant future.

I just learned by reading a bit of the background here that Ontario is one of several North American jurisdictions where anti-scalping legislation currently is in force. The Ticket Speculation Act already prohibits the buying and reselling of event tickets at a price higher than their face value except for a small commission—and we believe in a free market here in Ontario—for ticket agents, a maximum of 50 cents on a ticket worth \$4 or more. That does seem very reasonable to me. As I say, we are in a free economy, and the private sector should have the opportunity.

Earlier today, I talked about the scalpers at the Memorial Centre back in 1996 when we hosted the Memorial Cup. That was indeed a great event. I remember, as I said, the Sunday game, the last game of the Memorial Cup tournament between the Peterborough Petes and the Granby Prédateurs for the province of Quebec. It was so hot that day that there was fog in the Memorial Centre; you could hardly see the game. But arriving there for the 1 p.m. start, there were speculators—24 of them—standing out front of the Memorial Centre. They were supporters of the Brandon Wheat Kings. We eliminated them very early in the tournament, but they had their packages, and rightfully so. Before they were heading back to Brandon, Manitoba, they wanted to liquidate those ticket packages, so they were out front selling those tickets. Madam Speaker, I want you to know that the Leal family did not partake. We had our tickets, so we said no to those ticket scalpers out there because by buying them, that would have indicated that we're supportive of that kind of activity, so we did not want to do that.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Good for the Leal family.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, I say to the member from York West. He knows integrity when he sees it.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Absolutely.

I'm told that the Consumers' Association of Canada, a very reputable organization that we all have great confidence in, has received a number of complaints in recent years that people are unable to buy tickets for events online even if they place their orders online at the moment of first sale. Although the tickets are said to be sold out, they are available from an affiliated organization at higher prices.

Let's put this in perspective for one moment in Peterborough. If you were going to attend that John McDermott concert at Showplace in Peterborough at the end of November or Michael Burgess in December—that would make an excellent Christmas gift, I would think. If were you to look online, I say to my good friends in Peterborough—and members of the O'Toole family, let me tell you. George O'Toole, the member from Durham's first cousin, lives down the street from me. George and Edna, very fine people—and they vote Liberal, too, which is great, I know that. I know they were swayed at one time by the member from Durham, but they said they looked at the situation in Peterborough and they knew who to mark their ballot for, and I'm pleased about that. But let's use them for an example.

If George was to go online today and he wanted to take Edna and his family to see John McDermott at Showplace in Peterborough at the end of November, and he looked online and he found out that it was a sold-out concert—most people would accept that. John McDermott, as we all know, is a very distinguished Canadian performer, and we all would like to see John McDermott. If Edna and George were out walking on George Street on that particular evening in front of Showplace Peterborough and, lo and behold, they came across 10 scalpers with tickets for that event, they rightly would be very concerned.

Madam Speaker, I know you would agree with me. If you and your husband had that experience at a theatre in Kitchener, Ontario, and you were told online that it was sold out and you soon discovered—I know your husband is very busy being a doctor—you'd be very upset. You would expect your government, the government of Ontario, to take corrective action to make sure that that would not happen.

Our proposed amendments to the Ticket Speculation Act aren't designed to address that specific concern. They will prohibit a business model that provides an incentive for a company to withhold sales of tickets on the primary market and, instead, redirect these tickets to a related secondary seller for sale at higher prices. We want to see that eliminated.

I know I heard from across the aisle their concern that it's taken some period of time to get this right. Well, it's important. The Ticket Speculation Act, Bill 172—I think, as the Attorney General shared with us when he made his introductory remarks a short time ago, it's important to get it right.

I'm just reading from a number of things here. In the spring of 2009, class actions were commenced against Ticketmaster and its affiliates in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and Manitoba. The Quebec action has been stayed

pending the outcome in Ontario. Arguments on certification of a class action in Ontario are scheduled to be heard in May 2011, next year. The Ontario action attacks the service charges on primary sales and links between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow, the secondary sales site.

As I toured last week, on constituency week, from community to community—I was in Lakefield. I was in Curve Lake, a First Nations community in the northern part of my riding, for a great event last Friday. We had 27 graduates at Curve Lake—to become solar technicians. Indeed, it was a very joyous celebration. These individuals—21 were from Curve Lake, and the other six were from First Nations communities across Ontario—went into a very intensive training program. They had their graduation last Friday. I congratulate Chief Keith Knott, a wonderful man, a good friend of mine, and one of his associates, a fellow by the name of Michael Jacobs. Michael was the training coordinator who put the candidates through the paces.

By the way, if you're ever in Curve Lake, I recommend you drop by the Whetung art gallery. It's one of the most famous First Nations galleries right across Canada. It's open seven days a week throughout the year. If you're ever in Peterborough, go up to Curve Lake and visit the Whetung gallery. They would be very pleased to have you drop by.

I just digressed for a moment there talking about some of the good things that are happening in Peterborough.

By the way, also in Lakefield on Friday, we announced the enhanced ServiceOntario. So, if my friend from Sarnia, who may have a cottage in the Kawartha Lakes, needs his driver's licence renewed, needs his licence plate sticker, or he and his wife need a new health card, ServiceOntario in Lakefield now provides that very comprehensive service. That's a tribute to the great leadership of my colleague Harinder Takhar, Minister of Government Services, who is responsible for ServiceOntario.

Talking about ticket speculation, on Saturday I also had the opportunity to go through Stirling, Ontario. Stirling is a lovely community, part of the riding of the Minister of Education, Prince Edward-Hastings. What is unique about Stirling, of course—the former home of Rob Ray. Those who follow hockey will know Rob Ray had a distinguished career. He played for the Buffalo Sabres—Rob Ray, a good hockey player. They used to have a sign up going into Stirling: "The Home of Rob Ray." Someone took that down, but I could ask the minister to put that back up again. Or there could be some ticket speculators—

Interjection.

1620

Mr. Jeff Leal: Rob Ray played defence, I think, to the member from Sarnia, but I will check for him and get him an answer back tomorrow.

But what I was concerned about—

Mr. John O'Toole: Is he related to Bob Rae?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Rob Ray? No, he's no relation to Bob Rae.

Laughter.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know the member from Kenora—Rainy River was laughing at the relationship between Rob Ray and Bob Rae, but I can assure him that there's no relationship.

Going through the great community of Stirling on Saturday morning—I'm hoping they don't have any ticket speculators—they have a brand new agricultural museum. It is so exciting that there could be ticket speculators lining up in front of that brand new facility to see something inside there. That is a great facility. The leadership of the Minister of Education and her counterpart brought about that investment for that brand new agricultural museum for Hastings and Northumberland, and it will be a wonderful facility. I can't wait for the opportunity to tour it. I hope they're not going to sell tickets for the opening, because I know that facility will be so popular that someone may want to scalp tickets out front when that wonderful facility is opening.

I've just got to get back here to a few of the notes that they provided me with. I know Peterboroughans have said that it's unacceptable to allow a business model in which a company may have the incentive—and I want to emphasize that, “incentive”—to withhold tickets for the primary market and redirect them for sale at a higher price through another related company. I know everybody in this House, all 107 members, would certainly not want that to happen.

The proposed amendments to the Ticket Speculation Act will enhance consumer protection by (1) prohibiting related primary ticket sellers and secondary ticket sellers, including brokers and agents, from selling tickets to the same events; and (2) permitting a fine of up to \$5,000 for individuals and up to \$50,000 for those companies that contravene the law. Those are very severe penalties if you find yourself in breach of Bill 172.

We look forward to this bill going to committee, an opportunity for Ontarians—perhaps some people who reside in the wonderful riding of York West may want to come forward and have an opportunity to speak about this.

I also want to put in a plug. Carey Price has played phenomenally for the Montreal Canadiens—a save percentage of 0.963. My friend Bob Gainey from Peterborough made an excellent decision when they traded Halak and went with Carey Price. I think that may be their vehicle to be in the Stanley Cup final again this year.

I need to conclude that this bill is about fairness. It's about nurturing the trust of the Ontario consumer, who is very vital to continuing to build—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to commend or concede to the member from Peterborough that he has a great recall on history, and also some of my relatives, who probably, secretly, may have changed their vote. But you never know. These are secret ballots.

But the issue here that he was talking about—I want to clarify for the record that Rob Ray, who you were talking

about, actually played right wing; Bob Rae was actually left wing. Rob Ray played for Ottawa and Buffalo, and Bob Rae played for the NDP and the Liberals. So they always switch teams. It seems to me that if you had somebody scalping tickets for either one of those players today, you wouldn't get much for them.

But this is another example, a clear example, that this government will talk about anything but the bill. The reason is that there's nothing in the bill. It will not fix the problem. In fact, it's 18 months old; it's stale-dated. It should actually be withdrawn and re-entered as a bill more substantively dealing with technology and counterfeit tickets.

Let's put some substance in this bill. Let's turn the page here and move into a discussion about serious issues, about fraud and counterfeit on the Internet. This stuff that we've been playing around with this afternoon is wasting the people of Ontario's time, at a cost of probably \$1 million an hour to run the government and all its facilities. We're doing a disservice to those public servants who are working today here and listening to this trite drivel from the government.

I'm waiting for the member from Sarnia-Lambton to bring some contextual history to this bill and categorically demonstrate that the bill simply doesn't get it done. Here we have a government that's bereft of ideas, and the most disappointing thing today is that we were expecting you to have the economic update today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: I wanted to add comments to those of the member from Peterborough. He talks about Rob Ray; he comes from Stirling, as he said, and then he played for the Cornwall Royals. In his NHL career, I think one year he scored eight goals for the Buffalo Sabres. His claim to history was the Rob Ray rule for fighting. His equipment could easily be torn off. He would take off all his equipment—shoulder pads, elbow pads, everything—so they had to change the fighting rule so that equipment couldn't easily be taken off in a fight. Rob Ray certainly wouldn't cause ticket speculation, although I guess people do go to hockey games to see fights sometimes. As they say, “I went to a fight and a hockey game broke out.”

Anyway, I think that that's the correlation between Rob Ray and this legislation. There's not much ticket speculation in Sabres games, as you know, because most of the Canadians who go to Sabres games get a discounted price, it seems. But anyway, if you want to see Rob Ray today, I think he's a colour analyst now somewhere in the States. I think he played for Rochester, too.

Ticket speculation, as the member from Peterborough said, affects all communities, whether you're in Stirling or Cornwall, especially when you're going to go see a playoff hockey game or a big superstar like Bobby Curtola when he comes to Peterborough to sing, or somebody like that. People get all excited and they want to see these great artists perform. Not too many people

here remember Bobby Curtola, but I think he came from—the member from Kenora knows. I think he came from Thunder Bay, didn't he?

Anyway, those are my two cents on Rob Ray, spelled R-a-y, and Bobby Curtola.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I believe the lack of importance of this bill is indicated by the degree to which almost everyone who has spoken has spoken about something else entirely, including the member from Peterborough, who claims to know the hockey player Rob Ray but doesn't know what position he played and doesn't know what he accomplished in hockey. But it just goes to show you that when you have a bill that does nothing, that frankly is a piece of drivel, members have to find something to talk about, so they even talk about stuff that they don't know about, including the member for Peterborough.

I have heard the most incredible nonsense here. Anyone knows that if you want to go to a Leafs game today, all kinds of people can't get tickets, so they go to StubHub or they go to one of the other Internet sites, they get their tickets and, yes, they pay more than what the ticket initially retailed for. Is this bill going to do anything about that? Nothing. Not a darn thing.

This bill is another example of a government that puts out press releases saying, "We're really going to change the world," and then you read the bill and you find that it does next to nothing. Then you have a day of debate like this in the Legislature, where members get up and talk about just about anything rather than talk about the bill, because there's not really anything to talk about in this bill. It doesn't do what it says it's going to do, that's the first problem; and second, I think if you asked the great majority of people across Ontario if this is a major problem that they think warrants government attention, they'd say no.

So let's have more debate.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member from Ancaster-Flamborough-Dundas and—

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Westdale.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: The riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts, the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams. Anyhow, I appreciate that and your ability to remember. It's alphabetical: A-D-F-W. That's how I remember it when I'm out there and I've had a couple, right?

In any event, I'm pleased to add my voice to the crescendo of support for this bill. I mean, it's clear that while people want to talk about other things, invariably they come back and conclude by saying, "It's a good bill. Why don't we just vote on it?" I don't have a problem with that.

I can inform the House, for those who have ears to hear, that as a former Minister of Consumer Services, a frequent complaint we received from Ontarians all across

this province related to ticket scalping and inappropriate practices. We were pleased to work with the then Attorney General to draw this serious matter to the attention of his office and to urge that some action be taken to specifically curb the consumer abuse that was out there.

This bill isn't perfect—I mean, let's not kid ourselves—but it's a darn good start. It's a way of articulating a belief and, more importantly, a set of values that our government holds true, and that's that consumers ought not to be exploited. If we can do something to make that a bit easier—it's not whether you play left wing, right wing, centre or goalie. Canadians are going to win as long as the price is right, right? In any event, it's something that we need to do. There's never a wrong time to do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Peterborough has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much. I appreciate the insightful comments from the member from Kenora—Rainy River, Eglinton—Lawrence and Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Just for the record, to my friend from Kenora—Rainy River: I said Stirling was the home of Rob Ray. He did play for the Buffalo Sabres, which is indeed correct. As a Montreal Canadiens fan, we never paid much attention to the Buffalo Sabres; that's okay.

This bill, Bill 172, will go to committee in the not-too-distant future. That will afford the opportunity for those people who have a particular interest in this particular bill to come forward to make insightful presentations and then look at ways, I would think, to make amendments to this bill. Then we'll have the opportunity to bring it back into the House for third reading and then approval, and hopefully proclamation of the bill, to get at a problem that is not, perhaps, something that one discusses at the evening dinner table but is an issue if one has had the unfavourable experience of going online and trying to book tickets, particularly concert tickets, and then finding out after that happens that indeed the concert has taken place and there were a significant number of scalpers out in front of the venue where the concert has taken place. I mean, you would have a pretty bad feeling if you played by the rules, could not get your tickets and you found out that there's a group of people who usurp the rules to get these tickets and sell them at highly inflated prices. This is what this bill is about, and we look forward to it going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Mr. David Zimmer: On a point of order: I've been here all afternoon, and I feel compelled to pick up on something that the member for Kenora—Rainy River spoke to when he did his two-minuter a couple of minutes ago, and that's this issue that we've been here in the afternoon debating this bill. It has serious consequences for constituents here in Ontario, and yet I note that all of the members of the opposition—I don't think

any one of them spoke directly to the substance of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This is not a point of order.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings to announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on second reading of Bill 172.

Acting government House leader.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No further debate, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): If the debate is deemed adjourned, I call for orders of the day.

Second reading debate adjourned.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Ms. Wynne, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, but just before I do, I wanted to just say that I think that this is a very important piece of legislation. I think that it allows parents to provide opportunities for their kids, it takes the edge off and allows for a wider range of activities for children. Anything that we can do to help families and to support them in providing those activities, I think we should be doing.

I know that the member for Kitchener-Conestoga is going to talk about the details of this legislation, but I just want to say how fully in support we are of supporting families and kids being able to access activities in their communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener-Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure today to stand in the House for third reading of the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, 2010.

I thank the acting government House leader for her comments. As the former Minister of Education, she is quite familiar with children and the formative years and learning and growing and developing and how significant this act is in allowing access for children during the formative years to this type of activity. So I thank the acting government House leader for her comments and her introduction.

This proposed act contains amendments, as we know, to the Taxation Act, 2007, and it looks to implement a new, permanent tax credit for Ontario families. This new,

permanent tax credit would provide \$75 million each year to assist with the cost of enrolling children in extracurricular activities and would benefit more than 1.8 million children in over 1.1 million families in Ontario. So we're talking about significant numbers and a significant effect and improvement to 1.8 million children and over 1.1 million families in the province. So this is quite significant.

We know that children benefit immensely from a diversity of experiences and opportunities, and our government wants to make it easier for parents to give their children these opportunities by saving families money and, of course, helping families in Ontario with their family budgets. The proposed tax credit is part of the five-year Open Ontario plan, which supports job creation and enhances programs and services that the people of Ontario value, including education, health care and skills training. It also supports our budget commitment to invest in Ontario's children and to provide them with a strong start in life, to expand on their hopes and dreams, to give them that strong start and to support them in achieving their hopes and dreams.

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I refer to a quote that tells us, "Consult not your fears, but your hopes and dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but what it is still possible for you to do." That was Pope John XXIII. What we're focusing on here is allowing those opportunities for 1.8 million children in the province of Ontario to still achieve those things that are possible for them and fulfill their potential.

This credit builds on a comprehensive tax plan which includes the cuts that came into effect in January, lowering taxes for 93% of Ontario income tax payers. It's also part of a package of tax credits that is we have recently introduced, including the proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit, which would help seniors with their energy costs and property taxes, and of course the new northern Ontario energy credit which helps northerners with their energy costs. In fact, if you add up all the tax and tax-based benefit changes that we've introduced since taking office, we expect a typical single parent earning \$25,000 a year will be almost \$1,000 better off and a typical single parent on social assistance will have almost \$1,500 more in his or her pocket.

Our government remains committed to enhancing existing services and introducing innovative new services to create measurable improvement in the lives of the people of Ontario. Over the past seven years, these investments have raised the quality of life of the people of Ontario and are helping our economy and our families to adapt to these sweeping global changes.

Of particular focus for this government has been improving opportunities for Ontario's children and youth, and of course working to fulfill the potential of our youth. As of 2009-10, all primary classes in Ontario had 23 or fewer students and 90.5% had 20 or fewer. In 2009-10, 68% of all grades three and six students met or exceeded the provincial standard in reading, writing and

math, which is a 14% increase since taking office. In 2008-09, 79% of Ontario students graduated with a high school diploma, which means more than 52,500 additional students have graduated since we took office.

The proposed children's activity tax credit would support our children's learning outside of the classroom and continue to fulfill their potential outside of the classroom. It helps ease the budget of parents at all economic levels so that all children have a chance to pursue the activities that interest them the most. I thought I would give some specific examples as we go through to make it real and to highlight exactly what the activities are that children are interested in these days and that different communities offer in terms of fitness and non-fitness activities.

Examples of these activities that youth can pursue and that interest them the most: In my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, we have all sorts of interesting groups and organizations in all three of the townships and in Kitchener as well. For instance, in Wellesley, youth will be able to continue to participate and families will have support in their child participating, for instance, in the 1st Wellesley scout groups or the St. Clements Boy Scouts. Perhaps they would be interested in the St. Clements Skating Club or St. Clements Minor Ringette or the St. Clements minor soccer. In the township of Wilmot they could be interested in participating in the New Dundee Minor Ball Association or the New Hamburg Hockey Association, the Centre Stage Dance Studio in New Hamburg, the Innovative Dance fitness facility which specializes in dance and is located in Baden, and of course the St. Agatha and district Scouts association—a huge variety and wide range of activities and sports being offered throughout the province. I'll continue to highlight some specific to my riding.

Under our proposed tax credit, parents and guardians would be able to claim up to \$500 in eligible expenses for a credit of up to \$50 per child under 16 years of age or up to \$100 per child with a disability under the age of 18 years. This is one more thing we can help do to put money back into the pockets of Ontario's moms and dads. Eligible expenses would include registration and membership fees, as well as fees that are paid to cover the cost of uniforms, for instance, or facility rentals, referees, judges, incidental supplies, administration and instruction. We know how important that is. Any of us who are parents of children who are involved in these activities—being a soccer mom where you're on the pitch and everyone is out there waiting to go, you know how important it is that that referee shows up. Being able to support the cost of the rental or the referees, or the uniforms for the children, is absolutely essential.

The proposed tax credit would cover activities that fall into two categories, as I mentioned earlier, both fitness and non-fitness activities. The criteria for eligible fitness activities would be the same as for the federal children's fitness tax credit. The activities would require a significant amount of physical activity that contributes to cardio-respiratory endurance, plus one or more of muscle strength, muscular endurance, flexibility, and balance. To

be eligible for the credit, both fitness and non-fitness activities would have to be supervised and would also have to be suitable for children. Some examples, of course, would be fitness activities such as soccer, karate, figure skating, baseball and lacrosse. It goes on and on. So again, I'll give you the list, but I'll do it with specific reference.

In Kitchener, for instance, so in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, there are lots of things that youth can be involved in. There's the Conestoga Sailing Club; there's Kitchener minor soccer; there's the K-W Sertoma speed skating, K-W synchronized swimming, K-W track and field, K-W water polo. There are riding programs, ringette. There's K-W rowing, Guelph rowing—and, of course, I'm smiling because rowing is something that my sons have recently become involved in. We talk about fulfilling their potential and raising their horizons and showing them things that they didn't think they could otherwise be involved in. For my boys, they just recently rowed the Head of the Charles rowing regatta with their father because they became involved in the Guelph Rowing Club. So the exposure for children at a young age, of course, in the formative years, is absolutely crucial. This allows this to happen, as we said, for 1.8 million children.

The McGuinty government's proposed children's activity tax credit builds on the federal children's fitness tax credit but would be different in a few significant ways.

First, our children's activity tax credit would be refundable. What that means is that low-income families or parents who pay little or no income tax would also be able to benefit.

Second, the Ontario tax credit would cover a wide range of activities, not just sports activities. For instance, for non-fitness activities to be eligible, they must fall under one of the following categories: instruction in music, dramatic arts, dance or visual arts; language instruction; activities with a substantial focus on wilderness or the natural environment; structured interaction among children where supervisors teach or help children develop interpersonal skills; activities with a substantial focus on helping children develop and use intellectual skills; enrichment in tutoring and academic subjects.

Again, examples of these types of non-fitness activities, specifically from Kitchener-Conestoga, include, for instance, the Breslau, Bloomingdale, Maryhill Band; Learn to Play a Wind Instrument; byDesign Arts Education in Bloomingdale, in the township of Woolwich; and Music for Young Children, again in the township of Woolwich. In Kitchener, for instance, there is the Palabras Language School and Cultural Services, or the Grand River Chinese School language program. All of these things become accessible and available to children to expand their minds and expand their horizons and, of course, their opportunities for the future.

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For both fitness and non-fitness activities, programs would qualify as eligible if they are not part of a school curriculum and conform to a set of guidelines. Eligible

programs include those of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks in which all or substantially all of the activities include a significant amount of the qualifying activity, or a program of a duration of five or more consecutive days of which over 50% of the daily activities include a significant amount of the qualifying activity. Furthermore, membership in an organization of a duration of eight or more consecutive weeks would be eligible for the tax credit if over 50% of all activities offered to children by the organization include a significant amount of whatever that qualifying activity is. Membership in a program or organization that allows children to choose from among a variety of activities where half or less than half of those activities meet the conditions would qualify, of course, for a portion of the cost of that membership.

The McGuinty government knows the importance of broadening the criteria of this credit because the benefits of keeping our kids active and keeping our children healthy go beyond just physical exercise. A 2008 study conducted for Statistics Canada concludes that children who participate in extracurricular activities benefit not only from increased academic performance, but develop healthy social behaviours as well.

In February 1997, the medical journal *Neurological Research* published the findings of a two-year experiment that explores the link between music and brain development. The study reports that music training, specifically piano instruction, dramatically enhances children's abstract reasoning skills necessary for math and science studies. Additionally, those children who received piano or keyboard training performed 34% higher on tests that were measuring spatial-temporal ability.

The children's activity tax credit would be the only credit of its kind in Canada provided for a comprehensive range of children's activities. Our proposed credit also differs from the federal credit because the \$500 amount used in calculating the credit would be indexed for 2011 and subsequent years so that credits would keep pace with inflation. This way, we can ensure that we continue to provide the necessary assistance to Ontario families, both now and in the future.

All Ontario parents who enrol their children in eligible programs could claim the tax credit on their annual income tax returns, beginning with the 2010 tax year. That means that any eligible expenses incurred on or after January 1, 2010, would qualify.

The benefits of the children's activity tax credit are, of course, as we've mentioned and discussed, more than just financial. Research has shown that keeping our children active also aids in neurological growth. A study published in August by the University of Illinois draws a direct correlation between physical exercise in children and brain development. The study finds that fit children have significant development in the part of the brain that aids in maintaining attention and what the study calls executive control, which is defined as the ability to co-ordinate action and thought crisply.

In a separate study, a group of nine- and 10-year-old children were categorized by fitness levels and had their

brains scanned. The children completed different tests, this time focusing on complex memory. Sure enough, the MRI scans revealed that the fittest children had increased brain development. These findings support what many Ontario parents already know: that keeping our children active and healthy helps them to be successful in so many different ways. Involving them in activities outside of school promotes valuable skills that they will use to be successful throughout the rest of their lives.

An educated and healthy population is critical to Ontario's prosperity, as we know, both now and in the future. Our government believes in starting this lifelong process as early as we can. We know that studies show that the formative years are crucial to development.

Liz Weaver, who is the president of Parks and Recreation Ontario, says her corporation "is pleased that the McGuinty government is taking steps to encourage Ontarians to enrol their children in sport and recreation activities." Liz goes on to say that, "Children that participate in good-quality sport and recreation programs are healthier, do better at school, have higher self-esteem and are more likely to be active throughout their lives." She concludes by saying, "By making this new tax credit refundable and retroactive ... and by expanding the range of recreation programs that are eligible, more Ontarians will benefit."

Andre Picher, who is the co-founder and co-director of Wholeplay, which is a Toronto organization providing child development classes to parents and to children, has also expressed his support for this credit. Andre goes on to say, "The credit would be of great help to the province's families in that it would make the costly activities that kids need and parents want to provide more affordable and accessible." Andre concludes by saying, "It's great for the province in that the investments in early childhood health reduce future expenditures on things like health care and social assistance. It's also good for small businesses like us because we need to be able to provide excellent programs for kids while keeping them affordable to parents. The credit helps keep us in business and stimulates the economy. This tax credit goes a long way towards helping all those positive ends be met."

As I mentioned earlier, our government supports learning both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. In addition to announcing the new children's activity tax credit, September also marked the initial phase of implementing our commitment to make full-day learning available for all four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. Full-day kindergarten provides children with the foundation that they need for future learning and supports student achievement; it builds on the successes we've already seen in lowering primary class sizes and increasing graduation rates.

Full-day kindergarten classes are supported, as we know, by two qualified educators. Many of these early childhood educators—700, in fact—returned to school to pursue training through the Second Career program over the last two years. Through the Second Career program, Ontario's early childhood educators are trained to provide the best care and learning environment for our kids.

Along with our implementation of the full-day learning and our proposed children's activity tax credit, our government is also investing in child care as part of the larger package. Earlier this year, our government announced that it's stepping in to permanently fill the gap left by the federal government with an investment of \$63.5 million a year to preserve 8,500 child care spaces. This brings Ontario's annual investment in child care to approximately \$869 million.

This funding will provide stability in the child care sector while the province continues to press the federal government to restore full funding for child care. It remains a priority of our government to support the approximately 4,600 licensed child care programs in Ontario that serve more than 263,000 children up to the age of 12.

The children's activity tax credit would build on the significant measures that we have already taken to support children's activities. Of course, the after-school initiative, which provides youth in high-risk communities after-school programming, includes programs such as healthy eating and nutrition education to help combat childhood obesity; physical activity to encourage active lifestyles; personal health and wellness education to promote self-esteem; and activities that address specific priorities based on whatever the local community needs may be.

We also have an agreement with the federal government to fund sports programs for Ontarians with a particular emphasis on enhancing opportunities for young people, aboriginal Canadians and people at risk. Under this agreement, both governments are each contributing \$2.65 million, for a total investment of \$5.3 million over three years. Funding will go towards programs such as the Track and Field Fitness project, which provides organized activity sessions for more than 10,000 aboriginal children and young people in 60 First Nations communities.

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Other programs include the Bridging the Gap Through School Support project, which offers leadership training for senior students in the phys ed leadership course. The Sports Camps for Kids initiative helps Boys and Girls Clubs across Ontario offer customized sports camps to more than 5,000 children and young people at risk.

Ontario has also supported a number of children's activities by investing \$4.5 million since 2006 in the Ontario international amateur sport hosting policy. Of course, we know that our funding has gone toward supporting such things as the 2007 FIFA under-20 World Cup of soccer, the 2009 World Junior Hockey Championship and the 2010 International University Sports Federation's world university cross-country championship.

Furthermore, we have the healthy communities fund, a one-window approach to funding local organizations for the delivery of health promotion initiatives that relate to physical activity, sport, recreation, healthy eating, injury prevention, substance and alcohol misuse, and mental

health. The healthy communities fund has provided an estimated \$21.9 million to 369 organizations across Ontario to deliver local, innovative health promotion programs—of course, all positive steps forward to supporting the province and the families in the province of Ontario and ensuring Ontario's success for generations to come.

The children's activity tax credit and other measures I have outlined are excellent examples of investments our government is making to support the very foundation of our Open Ontario plan, which is, of course, the people themselves.

When we talk about supporting people and doing things that make a direct difference, we really have to make a comment to support the men and women who create these programs, who run these programs in our local communities, who make these opportunities available for youth and children and for parents to make it possible for their children to participate in such things as the Waterloo rugby club or the Topspin Table Tennis Club, the Woolwich Figure Skating Club or the Elmira Karate Dojo. When you go through these lists—and this is just one riding, Kitchener-Conestoga—but when we look across the province at all of the organizations and clubs, the available programs that are available for children to increase their exposure, to help them reach their hopes and dreams in both physical and non-physical activities, we start to get a feel for how significant this bill is in terms of making opportunity and development available for our children.

Of course, part of this is that we remain committed to the Open Ontario plan. It lays the foundation of the government strategy to position the province for these new opportunities, this new job growth, this new economic growth, and it will create even more opportunities for the people of Ontario and their children. It's about reassessing how we do business in the province and how we can best provide for the times ahead. It's about maximizing the existing resources that we have. Our resources consist of our people, our programs and the processes that can best be followed until an economic recovery takes hold. It's about strengthening the province. It's about investing in our children. As we know, our children are Ontario's future.

As a vice-principal, I used to always say to staff and parents, when they were frustrated or had to just give the child that extra effort or one more program or one more tutoring or one more session, that we have to remember that Ontario's future walks through the doors of our schools and our programs every day.

This is another step forward by the McGuinty government to support these programs out of school, both fitness and non-fitness.

Parents want to make sure that their children have all of the opportunity they need to grow up strong and secure, to become happy, caring, productive and engaged citizens. Our families deserve nothing less, and the youth of Ontario deserve nothing less. So, I ask the House to support Bill 99, the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did listen with great interest to the remarks made by the member from Kitchener-Conestoga with respect to Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit, and there's a lot that I agree with. I agree with her that both physical exercise and physical activity are really important for a child's development, that it does stimulate brain development as well as having a healthy lifestyle.

I was really interested in her comments with respect to music training and how that is related to brain activity, particularly in terms of abstract concepts, and how that can really help in terms of ability in math and science later on. I agree with all of that. I think those are really important concepts.

But on the other hand, we have to take a look at this for what it is. It is a \$50 tax credit, up to \$100 if the child has a disability. Some have called this—I wouldn't myself—a cynical PR ploy, that it's really to divert people's attention away from the fact that the McGuinty government is taxing people to death, what with the HST, the extra fees that are being charged in schools and increased energy costs through those so-called smart meters. People have really had it up to here with taxation, so anything that looks anything like tax relief of course we're going to have to agree with. But the fact of matter is, this is really insignificant compared to the wall of taxes that people are being faced with, and I think that people have come to that realization. While they are going to be grateful for this, it's a real drop in the bucket compared to what has been taken away from people, in the face of the taxes that they're paying now and the increased energy fees that they can expect to pay in the future. You can anticipate that within the next year, energy costs are going to go up by at least another 25%, and I think people are aware of that. People are waking up to what's going on with this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I too listened to the government spokesperson from Kitchener-Conestoga. She recited a lot of information that is really not part of the bill. I think the crux of the matter for the bill comes down to this: When I look around my constituency, I see virtually every municipality now trying to link with organizations like KidSport or Right To Play because so many kids from low- and modest-income families cannot afford any longer to take part in a lot of community recreation, music or other events. Their parents just don't have the money. Their parents are struggling to pay a hydro bill that has doubled in the last 18 months. Their parents are having to find an extra \$1,200, \$1,500 a year just to pay the hydro bill. Their parents are having to find more money to pay the heating bill. Their parents are being met with a long list of other fees, whether it be an eco fee or whether it be another energy fee they simply don't have the money for. The reality is, in community after community after community, we're actually seeing kids

from low- and modest-income families being forced to drop out of these activities because their parents don't have the money.

I know in the press release, the government wanted to make this sound like it was the greatest thing since sliced bread. It was going to fix this. But \$50 is not going to fix it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Mississauga-Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It seems that the opposition members grasp the benefits of this particular tax credit. For parents, particularly lower- to middle-income parents, whose children are participating in an event, this tax credit means a great deal, and the structure of it ensures that this isn't something that if you're at the lower or the middle end, you think, "Well, I'm already maxed out in my tax credits. It just doesn't apply to me," because it's a refundable tax credit. Even if you've used up all of your tax credits, you still get reimbursed for this one. So the structure is right. It extends beyond sports. It extends to such activities as recreation, music, language and dance, and of course, you're able to claim 10% of the activity that each child is in, up to a maximum of 10% of \$500 per child or 10% of \$1,000 if your child has a disability. This is just one more way of helping Ontarians keep some money in their pockets.

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One thing that Ontarians have found out is that their taxes today are lower than they were on the last day of the Harris-Eves government. Your income taxes are lower, and your ability to afford things is higher.

So this is a new, permanent children's activity tax credit. It represents the investment of about \$75 million per year in families all across Ontario. It means a great deal to us in western Mississauga. It means a great deal to families in Churchill Meadows, Lisgar, Streetsville and Meadowvale; for many people who are pretty close to the edge, who have seen a lot of things go up in recent years. It's offset by lower taxes, but this is one other thing that's going to make participating in children's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was, I would say, listening carefully, but I did become saddened after a period of time because of the cynicism I noticed.

Now, here's how I interpret it. The HST was implemented on July 1. There was outrage, and rightly so; look what Gordon Campbell did. Premier McGuinty could take lessons. But here's the real issue. The real issue here is that quickly after that—this bill here, Bill 99, was introduced in September. There was another bill for seniors to give them—what this is is a clear admission that they went too deep on the tax and too fast, so now they're backing off. We understand that: "Mea culpa. I'm sorry," to the people of Ontario. That's kind of what the Premier is saying: "Excuse me. We went too deep into your pockets."

Now, let's look around and look at the damage they've caused. The economy is in a shaky condition. There are federal meetings on it. Here's the issue: As the member

for Whitby—Oshawa said, it's a cynical PR move. That's the word she used, and I think it precisely paraphrases how we've become cynical, suspicious of the moves of Premier McGuinty.

It's HST on everything. The member from Kenora—Rainy River, I think, said it very eloquently when he said—and he's involved in sports with minors, with his children and himself. He's engaged very much. Now we've got families who have to go to Play It Again Sports. Here's the more cynical thing: I've had complaints in my riding of Durham from my constituents, who are hard-working and honest, much like myself—but here's the deal: They actually are telling me now that when they buy used equipment they have to pay HST on it. When will it stop? That is the question that should be remaining in people's minds today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'd like to acknowledge the comments of the members from Whitby—Oshawa, Kenora—Rainy River, Mississauga—Streetsville and Durham.

I want to start—the cynicism. These are tough times, and what we're doing here is we're making it that much easier for parents to put their children in activities, both fitness and non-fitness activities outside of the school curriculum, which is absolutely essential to the development of our future and which I don't find cynical at all. When we're investing in our children, we're investing in our future, and investing in a new, permanent tax credit, a tax credit that's refundable, retroactive and indexed, to help the families of Ontario and put money back in the pockets of the moms and dads who want their children in these activities so that their children can be healthier, can have better self-esteem, can do better at school, can be more active throughout their lives—it's incredible that anyone can stand in this House and say that it's not a good investment to invest in our children, in the people of Ontario and in our programs. It's phenomenal.

I'd like to hear the opposition, in their complaints, talk to the Woolwich Girls Minor Hockey Association; to that eight-year-old girl who was unable to attain that, but with this tax credit, will be able to participate.

As I stand on the soccer pitch with my three sons, the parents tell me—there's one parent in particular who you wouldn't expect to benefit from this tax credit who took my hand and said, “Thank you. This means that my four children can all participate in four different activities that they're all interested in.” There are parents who go to four different activities and will continue to do so because of Bill 99 and the Ontario children's activity tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to be perfectly clear, right from the outset, that we're in favour of active lifestyles for children. We recognize the importance of culture, music, literacy—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Excuse me. Are you standing down the lead?

Mr. John O'Toole: I may take the hour. I will take as much time as I need. I haven't got quite enough, actually, for all I need to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All right. Please continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just put me down for the lead. Thank you.

I think this would be a good time to look broadly at the issue of the HST, so I may from time to time move off the specifics of Bill 99 to the general concern, even on the part of the government.

I want to put a couple of things on the table that are new. This is third reading, so it's too late to amend the bill, but I'm always a positive person; I always think the government might be listening. There could be somebody watching television at home who knows the Premier, a next-door neighbour or something, who could call him and say, “Why don't you try and get it right?”

I brought these ideas forward during second reading debate, so some of it may already be on the record. Obviously, it was ignored because they didn't pay any attention and do it.

Here's a good example: I would say that there are people here today on this bill, Bill 99—no one was paying attention, and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek said, wisely so, I might say, “It's a cynical ploy.” Those weren't his correct, exact words, but here's what he said: It's sort of a shell game.

In the limited time I have—an hour—here's the deal: The tax credit is a maximum of \$50. You can spend up to \$500 to get this credit. Here's how it works: If you went out and bought some equipment or something, this would qualify, or music lessons, and you bought an instrument, I think those things may qualify perhaps, but I'm going to clarify that later on. Or tutoring in a second language—all of these things I would be supportive of.

As a parent of five children, I know how expensive it is to pay for these things. Now I have five grandchildren, and my kids think I should be paying for the grandkids. Hello. It's their decision, and I'll be there to help them.

For example, there are sports I like that sound snobbish but they're not; they're a good deal. I looked into it. For two boys in hockey, it would be over \$1,000 each per year. I have three girls as well—young women now—beautiful children. But here's the point: We took out a ski membership. A family membership costs less than one for all of them to play ringette or all these individual sports, and we went as a family and we have for years and years and years—some would say too long.

This year I got the bill and guess what? After being a member for over 25 years, it's up 13%. I looked at my watch and I said, “You know, everything's more expensive in the Dalton McGuinty era—everything, including that.”

I'm not sure any of this would be deductible, because it only qualifies for children under 18 and you have to spend the money. There's a whole list of exemptions that aren't covered. For instance, when people are involved in these things, they're paying PST and GST. I get that, but it's still 13%.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: When you spend \$500—this is important, and I'm helping the member from Peterborough; math wasn't one of his better subjects. But anyway, here's the deal: If you spend \$500—now pay attention; we're going to work through this slowly—13%, that's \$65, roughly. That's \$65, and you get back \$50. They're going to send you a cheque. The cheque and issue will probably cost you, I would say, \$5 to \$10; that's what it'll cost to issue the cheque.

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I would say honestly that this—the media had it right. I'm going to look at some of the—actually, this is what the Windsor—this is a division of the Toronto Star that got it right. They say that it's a cynical PR move. They say, "Ontario finance minister Dwight Duncan is selling the new children's activity tax credit as a tax break for families who spend money on extracurricular activities for their kids." That's the laudable goal.

"This is designed to make it more affordable for parents to have their kids in sports and cultural events," Duncan said. Covering everything from hockey and soccer to art lessons, the measure allows parents to deduct up to \$500—here it is—"to receive [a] ... rebate of as much as \$50 per child or \$100 if their child is disabled.

"While every child should have access to activities that promote his or her health and well-being, this new policy is being met with much cynicism—and for good reason.

"The announcement comes two months after the introduction of the despised harmonized sales tax. NDP leader—to her credit—"Andrea Horwath noted the new credit merely offsets some of the cost increases" of the child because of the HST. "What would be the best is if the government had thought more carefully about the harmonized tax in the first place," she said." And I think that's right. They went far too deep, far too fast, and they got caught, and the people of Ontario are going to make them pay for it.

"A public relations move at best, the tax credit is an attempt by the Liberals to use children"—I look at the pages here, the new group of pages; it's a cynical ploy—"as a shield from the flack generated by the HST."

I think of these young pages. The activities—they're in here. They're coming. They're paying money. It's more expensive for transit; it's more expensive for your parents' gas; it's more expensive to clean those uniforms after. This tax is on everything; it's pervasive. It's like an oil spill. It's tragic. I can't disagree—the way they've framed it, the way they've packaged it, as if it's—if I vote against it, they're going to say, "You voted against"—the finance minister uses this very tried and sad and tired line. He says, "You voted against a tax"—

See, to me, we're catching on. You have run out of gas, you've run out of ideas and you've run out of fooling the people of Ontario.

I remember when the Premier was running for the first time in 2003, leaning up against the lamp post, sort of like this, saying, "I won't raise your taxes." What's the

first thing he did? Raise your taxes—the health tax. Now he's trying to get away with it again.

Not only that, here's the other thing: They say right now that one of their new plans is to improve energy. What they mean by improving energy—this is their energy strategy now. This is cynical, too. The energy strategy is this: Our leader, Tim Hudak—we're totally onside with conservation. We're totally onside with that. These are our ideas, if you look at the report. Look at the renewable energy report. You're copying some of it. Here's the deal, though: Their plan with the smart meters is to blame you, the consumer, for not doing your laundry on Sunday morning or Saturday. You've got to get up at 3 in the morning to wash your dishes or have a shower. They're blaming you. If your bill is too high, switch your usage, change your habits, get a night-shift job—whatever.

Here's the deal, though: They're blaming it on you. The consumer of Ontario is being told that you're guilty. It's Premier McGuinty's plan; it's failed. Here's the deal: You see the overrun at the Bruce nuclear station. They're trying to tell us on that Bruce station that none of that is going to show up in our tax bill. Are you kidding? You eat that—you should be getting this tax credit here for the children because I'll tell you right now, you're going to be paying for that for sure.

What I could tell you, though, is that in the contract they signed with Bruce Energy, if you read the contract, they guaranteed Bruce that all the power they generate they can get out at a certain price. They won't disclose the price, but they were guaranteed. What they did is they spent \$1 billion of your money to build a transmission line to get it out to where it's needed: Toronto. Why? Because they haven't got the capacity to create the energy within Toronto—that is, the political courage to do it. This bill, Bill 99—I believe that the Star has it right: It's a cynical ploy; it's a switch-the-channel; it's a fool-the-people-of-Ontario plan.

First of all, let's review the fundamentals. A family has to spend \$500 to \$1,000. It doesn't include some things—and I'm going to include some of them now for you because this bill isn't that large, really. It was drafted rather quickly. They knew they made a mistake with the budget bill on the new HST.

Here's what it says. It says, "For taxation years ending after 2009, an individual is able to claim a credit in respect of expenses incurred in enrolling a qualifying child in a program of physical activity prescribed under the Income Tax Act ... or a qualifying program. The maximum credit for 2010 is \$50 per qualifying child and an additional \$50 per qualifying child with a disability. The credit would be claimed in the tax return filed by the individual for the taxation year." In other words, if you don't pay tax or you don't file, you don't get it, surprise. A lot of people in that low income don't file, don't get it, so don't hold your breath. "Consequential amendments are made to subsections 84(1) and (3) of the act."

But it goes on to list "'eligible fitness expense' as the meaning assigned by subsection 118.03 of the Federal Act"—admissions that are eligible—"means, in respect

of a qualifying child of an individual for a taxation year, the amount of a fee paid to a qualifying entity (other than an amount paid to a person that is, at the time the amount is paid, the individual's spouse or common-law partner" and under age 18.

So they go into a lot of detail here, but really, ultimately, there are a lot of expenses that won't be covered. Do not be fooled that you have to spend the money and pay the tax on that activity and then you claim it after some more red tape and paperwork. They're in hopes that a lot of people will just say, "Fifty dollars? It's going to cost"—to get your income taxes now, you're going to have to pay the HST to have your income taxes done. So even to pay the government, you're going to have to pay tax on paying the government. It's so hypocritical that I'm not surprised the member from Whitby—Oshawa used the term "cynical PR move." I think she's dead right.

"Includes the cost to the qualifying entity of the program in respect of its administration, instruction, rental of required facilities, and uniforms and equipment that are not available to be acquired by a participant in the program for an amount less than their fair market value at the time." In fact, if things are contributed, you can't claim those expenses. It's obvious, I guess.

Not included: "(i) the cost of accommodation, travel, food or beverages,

"(ii) any amount that is an eligible fitness expense."

Here's what it comes down to. They crafted it—and it troubles me that we've come this, trying to wedge everybody on every issue. Tim Hudak has a young child. He will do everything, as any parent on this side or that side of the House, to give them every opportunity they can afford. We agree with that. Do not try to say that we're opposed to the intent. The NDP said it correctly: Why did you put that on it in the first place? You had the opportunity to provide a schedule of exemptions. Why didn't you exempt certain things like British Columbia and other provinces did? You didn't, and now you admit you're trying to fix it had because you screwed it up. Don't blame the people of the opposition for trying to look carefully when you have crafted such poor policy.

If I look more broadly, the other tax they tried to slip in at the same time was the eco tax. First they put—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Got rid of it.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough is right: They got rid of it. Why didn't you think it through properly? That's the error. You have no real plan here. There's no goal. There's no vision.

The Premier's a very nice person. I've heard him over the last several years. I'm starting to feel sorry for him, personally, because he's lost his way. Somehow, that passion and energy and forthrightness has sort of been—

Interjection: Where'd it go?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's been lost—the pressures of the job, perhaps; the economy going into the tank; the amount of unemployment; the closing of big industrial sectors across the province. It's no wonder he's tired. Under the last seven years—it saddens me. I'd like to get

into cabinet over there and kind of freshen it up a bit. But, look—

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Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're laughing now. They're laughing because—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The members on this side are quite willing to work hard, and there are qualified members in the caucus there that should get a chance at it in the last year of your office, because after that, it's going to be lights out.

Anyway, I'm not talking specifically—what I'm trying to get through is the cynicism that has been expressed on a thing that could have been handled differently. That would sum it up. I think the NDP have said that. Our side has said that. Our critic, Norm Miller, said to me on this that he's so frustrated with trying to work with Minister Duncan, the Minister of Finance, that it's hardly worth participating.

We've submitted some ideas. Mr. Miller of Parry Sound—Muskoka—we talked about this. Here's a good example: This bill is actually discriminatory. What is another vulnerable class of citizens in Ontario? I think it's seniors. Why didn't they give them the tax credit too? Seniors who keep active, taking tai chi, other fitness things, walking groups, trail hikers—why didn't they give them the tax credit? What's with this picking groups off? I could support this bill if you had looked at it in an efficient—right now, for instance, if you buy a gym membership because your child is suffering from obesity, or you are, why wouldn't you get a tax credit for a physical fitness membership? What's wrong with that idea?

We have some thoughtful discussions in our caucus about how we could make these things better for all citizens of Ontario. Forget the politics. That'll happen in October 2011. We're preparing some really important options for the people of Ontario, and two of them are integrity and straightforwardness. But this bill is an example of a timetable of the last seven years of a government that has lost the vision. They're picking things off sort of randomly.

As I tried to say before, and the member from Peterborough interrupted, they did cancel the eco tax. Why? Because they knowingly admitted, publicly, that it was a mistake. It was a sad error. I would have presumed that, being the kind of great person that the Premier was, he would have stood in the House and said, "Look, we went too far, too fast on this HST." Gordon Campbell did the right thing. He resigned. Now, I'm not suggesting that, but this is tying their hands. People are bound by this—bound and thrown into the fire almost, really.

It saddens me where Ontario is. Our young students are coming out of university and college and they're finding themselves with a lot of debt because we have the highest tuition in Canada. And now we're giving out grants to people from other countries to come here, and we're going to pay for four years. Wait a minute. Who's

he talking to? What country is he from? Look, this is Ontario, and our job is not Stephen Harper's job. He does the international stuff.

He had the big two-week trip over to Asia, and he makes the promise that you can come to Ontario and we'll pay for your education—a very sentimental move. Quite frankly, there is a struggle for skilled people. We have them right here in Ontario and they're being ignored. That saddens me. At least that's what I'm hearing from constituents—regular, normal people, not people who are part of the agenda, the priority people there that Premier McGuinty is listening to. I'm listening to the real, hard-working families that have had it up to here. We've hit the tax ceiling. We've hit the tax ceiling on this. We've hit it on almost everything.

Another thing that's getting mentioned a lot is insurance: auto insurance, home insurance, the financial market, the lack of a plan. Even on pension reform, they're trying to blame the federal government on that one. The federal government is trying to build consensus in the province and in all the provinces and territories, yet they're playing politics on that important issue as well.

I worry now about businesses that are high consumers of energy. They picked off northern Ontario, trying to get those votes, because they've got an energy tax credit for northern Ontario business. We need to have a consistent plan that recognizes the investment in jobs, investments in this sector, not just this bill here, this small, trivial admission that we're charging too much for children to participate in music, theatre, drama, arts and sports. But you've gone too far right across the board.

I would suggest that seniors—now, this is a serious commitment. I would support this bill—even if it's on my own, but our leader, I think, is on this, too—if we extended it to seniors. A keep-active lifestyle prevents a lot of the aging and deterioration of the mind and body. These are positive comments; they're not strictly rhetorical, negative things, where the Minister of Finance is going to be saying such things as, “You voted against the child activity tax credit.” It simply is not true.

We see this bill as an admission that they've gone too deep, too fast on all taxes across the board. It troubles me that when you look at this bill—as they say, it's only a matter of six—well, it's not even three pages, but there's a whole list of exemptions here. What's not included:

“ineligible activity” means an activity or type of activity prescribed by the Minister of Finance for purposes of this section.” So you've got full control there. That will all be dealt with in red tape and regulations;

“ineligible program” means a program or type of program prescribed by the Minister of Finance for the purposes of this section;

“qualifying activity” means a supervised activity suitable for children, that is not an ineligible activity.” What does that mean?

For me, it's difficult to try to contribute anything more than what I have said, even to the extent that they have in here how to calculate the activity tax credit. They've gone to that.

I think they should have spent more time on the schedule of exemptions when they introduced the HST. That's what the media says, that's what my constituents are saying and that's why they authored this bill a couple of months after the HST hit the streets and people realized that they're paying more for energy, they're paying more for registering their kids in hockey, they're paying more for everything. Then they say, “Well, eventually, you're going to get a \$300 cheque every couple of months.” Well, that cheque is called the transitional payment from the federal government. It's four-and-a-half billion dollars.

Now, people are saying to you, “Well, what's Tim Hudak going to do?” I'll tell what you we will do: We will be straightforward with the people of Ontario. That's one thing you can count on. We will do exactly what we say—and there won't be some sort of secondary game going on.

What they've done here is they've signed a poison pill agreement. What they've signed is, if there are any changes made to this within a certain period of time on certain schedules, you have to pay back the four-and-a-half billion dollars. So they've taken a loan. What have they done with the loan, the four-and-a-half billion from Stephen Harper and the federal government? They are going to give you three cheques of roughly \$300 each. One of them is going to come in just before the election next year. It's going to be like Santa Claus here in December, because you're going to get another one then. But that \$300 is an admission in itself that this is going to cost you big time. Check it out.

I'm going to give one example. If you use \$100 a week in gasoline getting to your work or for your work, your business, whatever it is—a taxi, whatever—\$100 a week. Add 13% onto it. It's now \$113. If you do the math, it's \$100 a week for 50 weeks of the year. There's about \$5,000-plus right there on one thing. You're going to get that same tax on your energy bill, heating your home, buying your food, cleaning your clothes, whatever. Plus, you're going to pay it when you register your children for any activity. You're going to pay for it when you do your income tax or file to buy RSPs for yourself.

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In my opinion, I believe we have hit the tax ceiling. I agree with good-quality public services, and I believe our leader does as well, but you've spent recklessly on the other side of the equation. Your lack of discipline on the monetary side or the fiscal side shows that you've increased spending in this province beyond your ability to pay. Now, our children are going to pay it because the operating deficit this year—we'll get the statement this week—is about \$19 billion to \$20 billion on a budget of roughly \$100 billion. We're actually spending 20% more than we have. That is debt. I ask you, is the quality of health care, is the quality of education, is the quality of research investment any better? No; that's what I see. I see deficits at the children's aid society. I see deficits at every hospital. I see no plan for long-term care. I see no

plan for seniors. I see a government that has lost its way. That's the real story here.

This bill gives me an opportunity, on behalf of our leader, to make it clear to the people of Ontario that you can fool me once—you know the saying. Be very careful. I'm saying this media headline isn't written as a political statement; it's written as a cynical PR move, which is what the Star said. There's the article. It's not something I'm making up to create some controversy.

The people of Ontario are getting it. They are staying tuned. Even this past couple of weeks there have been a couple of errors made, and now they're trying to use some of their language in their communications to change the channel on the energy debate. They're trying to get you to think that you're responsible for the problem, the mess they've created.

When I go to meetings in my riding of Durham on wind energy, as an example, there are three or four proposals there. Now, wind energy is often referred by the experts as an intermittent power source. In other words, when there's high pressure, there's no wind. When you have high pressure, it's hot or cold. When you need energy, it's usually when it's hot or cold, to have air conditioning or heating. This is a plan that hasn't worked in any country it has been used in. It may have some success in some regions, mostly offshore on the east coast of the United States—big plans there for five megawatts. We haven't resolved the issue whether or not it has medical side effects. That's another issue that, in all honesty, needs further debate.

No, they've gone ahead. They've exempted all these renewable energy plans from provincial or municipal oversight. The mayors and your councillors that you just elected have no say on these renewable industrial wind farms.

Now, on the solar side there's still controversy. They're paying people that have these solar panels, mostly on rooftops, 80 cents per kilowatt hour. Every kilowatt hour that they feed into the grid from that solar panel, they're getting 80.2 cents a kilowatt. It goes onto the system and it displaces traditional forms of power. It will displace nuclear power, and it will displace natural gas power when it's available.

It's about 5 o'clock when the sun goes down now. We're in daylight savings now, and so we've only got sun about six or seven hours of the day. I'm not sure how useful this is going to be, the solar part, but when you dispatch the renewable and you shut down the feed-in energy from other sources, those people are still at that gas plant or that nuclear plant being paid, but they're not using the energy that they're producing. That is a waste by any measure of a plan that's completely misguided.

The supply mix report that was issued is another example of a government that's lost its way. When I hear the Minister of Energy stand up here and say he has no history of what went on in this province—they voted against the refurbishment of the Pickering nuclear plant. Premier McGuinty was sitting on that side of the House, right here, when he was in opposition, and voted against

the refurbishment of Pickering, which kept the lights on. We spent billions of dollars refurbishing that plant and it's producing reliable energy at a predictable price now.

Some of the stuff that they're putting out there, like the \$7-billion Samsung deal, hasn't produced one megawatt and, I put to you, is not reliable or dependable. It's exporting jobs to Korea. Get it right: These aren't Ontario jobs. We have AECL. We have Candu nuclear. These are Canadian and Ontario products and jobs, and they're missing the boat entirely. They had to go to Samsung in Korea to find the experts; we have them right at the University of Ontario in Durham, nuclear experts: the best nuclear program in all of Canada, arguably all of North America.

I'm discouraged to be here often and realize that some people in Ontario have lost interest in paying attention. It isn't a game that's going well right now. What I'm saying on my behalf, as well as for some members of our caucus, I'm sure, is that this government at this time has run out of ideas, and some of the ideas might be troubling for many people in this province.

So I leave with one positive remark, amongst others that I have suggested: I don't see why they don't expand this bill. The Premier could do it. He has the authority to shut down the other decisions, the eco tax and stuff like that. He has the power, because they have the majority and they win every vote. We want to see this credit extended to seniors, because seniors are, in their homes now, especially those in apartments, paying more and being blamed for not conserving. They're paying more for energy that a few years ago, a couple of years ago, was five or six cents and now it's costing as much as—some predictors say it's going to be 34 cents a kilowatt hour. You're paying for the other wasteful spending in this energy sector under the Ontario Power Authority.

I think that I could say more, but we're certainly running out of time and I'd like to have some feedback in the few minutes that are left. Again, this bill simply tells the people of Ontario, "Be careful. Be wary. This is another move to deflect attention from the real issue, that they've lost their way." This child activity tax credit is an admission that their taxes have hit the wall and they know it. Seniors know it, consumers know it, children know it, and to me, even Gordon Campbell knows it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to say that this tax credit that they are giving to the families for activities, anything from music lessons to sports to other venues, is simply a PR move. This government is scrambling. This government is looking to correct the problems they have created with this HST. They've already done a 180 on the eco tax; that's another example of bad planning and bad research which has come back to bite them.

But let's talk about the bill itself. You have to spend \$500 to get a \$50 credit. Well, a lot of people in my area cannot afford the \$500 in the first place, so they don't have to worry about the credit. The registration for hockey alone sometimes is over \$400, so there it's shot in

one deal. The \$50, if you want to look at it that way, from a hockey perspective, will give me 10 skate sharpenings in a season. That's all that \$50 is going to get me. If I've got three kids in hockey, \$50 is nothing. It's like driving through Tim Hortons and asking for a dozen doughnuts, and you get a Timbit. It's absolutely useless to families in this province to really make an impact on the money they require to have their kids active in sports—it's actually an insult to them: \$50 on \$500.

I don't know what I would do with \$50 on \$500 if I had three kids in hockey. Travel hockey sometimes costs \$4,000 to \$5,000 a year per child. Fifty dollars: What's that going to do? Put gas in my car to get to one venue? It's ridiculous, and they're just doing it for PR. This is simply a government out of touch and scrambling.

1750

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to join the debate today. I listened intently to the first speaker from the opposition party and to my friend there from Stoney Creek.

You either care about kids or you don't, or you want to do something about kids or you don't. Certainly, when times get tight, you can either invest in children or not. I think this government has a history now of deciding that even when times are tight, you do what you can to help the most vulnerable and the younger people in our society.

You can find reasons to maybe object to that or maybe you say it's not enough. Maybe some people think it's too much. When we implemented full-day learning, for example, in JK and SK, some members of this House felt that kids weren't worth investing in. I think this side of the House is saying that, as we move forward, the society that we know is going to engage itself in the information age. We know that our young people are going to have to be really well-educated and we know that that's an investment that we need to make.

We also look at the health of our young people. We hear about type 2 diabetes. We had people in the House today with children with diabetes. I think we're learning more and more about the food we eat, the diets that our children are eating and that we've started eating that may not always be the healthiest. What we've decided to do as a government is to provide assistance to help young people with those health-oriented activities that make them grow into healthy adults. It's that simple.

I can understand the opposition saying it should be more. I can see some members of the opposition saying it should be less. But I think we should all agree in this House that we should do something to help young people and young families to be able to afford organized activities, and that's anything from hockey to dance to drama. Whatever it is that keeps young people active, healthy and fit, the province of Ontario should be helping where it can.

That's clearly the intent of that bill. It's that simple. You either support that or you oppose it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The member from Durham has raised some really important issues on a variety of topics this afternoon. I think we should heed his advice on a number of issues, but one thing that hasn't really been discussed right now until the member from Oakville brought up the issue of children—what about children with disabilities? I know that children can receive a \$50 tax credit and it can go up to \$100 for children with a disability, but the fact of the matter is, there are many programs and services that simply aren't available to children with disabilities in the province of Ontario.

Let's look at children with autism. There are many children who have an autism spectrum disorder who simply can't get into things like summer camps, athletic programs and so on because, on top of paying for their own child's enrolment fee, you have to send a caregiver to some of these programs and services because the staff simply can't handle them. That means that a lot of these programs really aren't even available to these children at all. They have no ability to go out and socialize, and that's not helped with the lack of children's mental health facilities in the province of Ontario, the lack of assistance for children with autism, the lack of funding for children's treatment centres.

Right now, we have children's treatment centres in the province of Ontario that are having to have their foundations do fundraising for operational services—not capital costs, not adding on new buildings and extra things; this is for basic services for the children who need their help for physiotherapy, for occupational therapy, for speech therapy, for social work assistance. All of these children's services are crying out for help, and they're not getting that from this government.

Similarly with young children—children grow into adults. If they are children with an intellectual disability, once they graduate from high school, they simply fall off a cliff. There are no programs and services for them. Any funding they would have received is cut off at that point and they're left sitting at home watching TV in their parents' basement.

That's the reality for many children and young people in Ontario today, and that's something that's certainly not being addressed by this children's activity tax credit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was here for the duration of the comments this afternoon by the member from Durham.

I have a son who's 12 and a daughter who's 11. Both play sports, so I spend an awful lot of time at the hockey arena, and indeed the basketball court now and certainly at indoor soccer.

But what's interesting is that the member from Durham missed an important part of history here. From 1995 to 2003, if you recall those eight years, the biggest barrier for sports for many people in communities was the exorbitant cost of trying to rent public facilities. You could not afford to rent a school gym because there were no dollars in the budget for community use of schools.

Well before we ever brought into being this proposal for a tax credit for kids' sports and other activities, we brought in a program after we were given the privilege of governing in the fall of 2003—funding for community use of schools. Let me tell you who took advantage of that: indoor soccer, indoor basketball, Cubs, Scouts and Girl Guides. We provided the funding so you could hire custodians to be there at gyms and school facilities over the weekend, because prior to 2003, it was prohibitive, from a costing perspective, for community groups to hire a custodian, because under the collective agreement, they had to be paid time-and-a-half to be there. So by funding community use of schools, community groups were able to take advantage and play basketball and play indoor soccer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek spoke about how he was insulted about it. The member from Oakville spoke about caring about children. He presented it as a wedge issue, politically, as if other people don't care about children, a rather elitist position. The member from Whitby-Oshawa spoke about not addressing the abilities issue. She is the chair of the Abilities Centre in Durham, working hard both in children's treatment centres and broadly in the community, so don't disgrace yourself by tearing someone else like her down.

The member from Peterborough, I thought, talked about community use of schools. I think it's important to

recognize that this society we live in today is quite different. I know that because I've been involved with my children and always use the schools. That never, ever stopped. In fact, they stopped extracurricular activities as part of a demonstration at the time. I would only say that—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member over there is piping up, but I guess my point is that even under this bill, Bill 99, what we've tried to do is put a couple of suggestions on the table, to not be discriminatory and extend it to seniors. I said clearly at the beginning of my remarks, if you were listening, that we support children's activities, whether they're artistic—in fact, they copied their idea from the federal government. The federal government has an activity tax credit as well for children.

But my point is, there doesn't seem to be any consistency here. When you have to say that this is only for children or only for elderly people, they've realized that this whole HST implementation plan was faulty. In fact, it's a failed implementation. I don't think the people have fully engaged on it, not like in British Columbia, but this bill is an admission that their HST taxes are simply wrong.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
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Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
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Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
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Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
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Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
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Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
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Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
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No. 68

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 16 November 2010

Mardi 16 novembre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act, when Bill 172 is next called as a government order the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet in Toronto on Thursday, November 25, 2010, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings and in Toronto on Wednesday, December 1, 2010, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and in Toronto on Thursday, December 2, 2010, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the clerk of the committee shall be 5 p.m. on Monday, November 29, 2010. At 9 a.m. on Thursday, December 2, 2010, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, December 2, 2010. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the

question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 172. As I've found, especially on this bill, but on a number of bills the government has introduced, at the end of the day, when all is said and done, there's more said than done. Anyway, this bill will probably be the same.

I don't know how long I've got; I want to make sure I don't run out of time.

Yesterday, the member for Peterborough took great pleasure in naming a number of events that my wife and I could visit in Peterborough if we had the opportunity, so I wanted to reciprocate in kind. There are a number of events that any of the Liberal caucus members, but especially the member from Peterborough, could come to if they came down to Bayfest. One of the big events in Sarnia-Lambton is Bayfest, put on by Michele Stokley and her family.

Interjection: Yeah, but he's going to scalp tickets to Bayfest.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, you might be scalping tickets there, the member for Peterborough, to help put that concert on.

But I wanted to mention some of the acts that have performed at Bayfest in the past. In 2010, there was Rush, Keith Urban, Weezer, Alan Jackson, the Black Eyed Peas; and some notable past performances, one from one of our caucus assistants to the House leader. He's in a band called Astronaut, and that's led by Dan Gordon, who supports our caucus and works with the House leader every day. A number of other bands that have performed there also are Aerosmith and Kiss. So if the member for Peterborough had the opportunity, I'd be glad to have him come down to Sarnia-Lambton. He'd

be able to take advantage of our Sarnia–Lambton hospitality.

Interjection: Don't let him go for free.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I didn't say I was going to treat him; I didn't go that far yet. It depends on how he treats me in the debate today. If he's his usual, regular, gregarious self, I'm sure that we'll be able to work out something.

Bill 172 is mislabelled. It should be called, in my opinion, the do-nothing bill. It's a do-nothing, diversion bill. It was brought forward, if you remember, Madam Speaker, at a time when the auditor's report was tabled to allow this government to avoid talking about what the auditor had drawn the public's attention to. This government isn't even serious about what they believe this legislation will do.

It was introduced in April of last year—that's 18 months ago—and it has sat on some bureaucrat's shelf since then and has been reintroduced this week, just recently, to try to fill in time in this Legislature, where we should be debating more substantive issues like, for example, the fall economic statement and the HST. The fall economic statement is late. If I was a teacher—not that I am—passing grades, when you say you're going to bring an assignment in on the 15th and you're not going to bring it in until the 18th, that, to me, would get a failing grade.

0910

I heard a number of government members yesterday. When they were speaking in reply to this bill, they said, "We have to bring this bill in. It's so important that we bring in this so-called scalping bill—Ticketmaster." If it's so important, how many people, in the last 18 months—while the bill has sat somewhere collecting dust in the netherworld of this Legislature, in some bureaucrat's office—have paid exorbitant prices, so-called by the Liberal Party, the government? How many people have paid exorbitant scalpers' fees in the last 18 months? Are we going to give them a rebate? Does anyone take responsibility, on that side of the House, for delaying this bill? If it's so urgent, if it's so important, what about those people? I think rather this Legislature, this government, reminds me of the 1948 election by Harry Truman, when Harry Truman ran against the do-nothing Congress and got re-elected. That's what this government is: It's a do-nothing government. They bring these showcase bills forward to try to fill in time when we could be talking about more important subjects.

Just to reiterate, my colleague the member for Halton clearly stated that this bill will not create one more seat at any venue, and this bill also will not save one thin dime for anyone buying a ticket to any event. We must keep in mind what this bill is all about. It was brought in after a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey that saw ticket prices that were greatly inflated. But rather than spending the required time to look at the problem and find a solution to actually tackle it, this government's reflex was to react to public opinion at that time with a piece of fluff legislation that is not well thought out and won't accomplish those targeted goals.

I understand the consumers' outrage. I support consumer protection, as all members of our side of the House do, and the members of the third party as well. I also support market fairness and consumer choice. But this bill will not improve customer protection. This legislation targets one group of ticket sellers and ignores others, such as brokers and scalpers. It will drive the market underground, where there is less consumer protection. This bill will not create fairness. In fact, the Ticket Speculation Act already prohibits the reselling of tickets above the ticket's value, but the act is not being enforced, like a lot of laws in this province aren't being enforced.

There's a good article in the National Post today which I read about a community not too far from here, where people are looking the other way and they're not enforcing laws. But that's a story for another day that someone else will speak to, unless I get back to it before I'm done.

So why should Ontarians believe that these new provisions will be enforced when, like I say, this government has done such a poor job—I didn't want to put another word in there—of enforcing the laws that are already in place? I don't believe that this government will enforce these amendments any more than they enforced the original bill and, in the end, consumers won't get any cheaper tickets. In fact, when I think about the lack of enforcement of the current legislation, I am reminded of this government's track record in regard to contraband tobacco, an issue that was again raised in my riding last week and in a number of ridings by convenience store owners, who are taking it in the neck.

Mr. Randy Hillier: And elsewhere.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And elsewhere.

To the viewers watching this morning—I know my mother is out there watching—and to others out there, this is a shame, that people in small business are being forced to jump through hoops by all these government rules and regulations. I go into these variety stores—I don't buy cigarettes for myself anymore, but I unfortunately have to buy them for others. Anyway, when you go in there and you've got all these panels in front of the cigarettes and you've got to memorize where they are, it's such a bunch of—I won't say what—when you can go just down the street and there's no enforcement; there are people selling cigarettes out of the trunks of cars, out of RVs and out of so-called construction trailers, and nobody is enforcing those. No one knows what's in those contraband cigarettes as far as quality and that. I've got a big problem with that.

This bill is simply being used as a do-nothing diversion tactic by this government. This bill was returned to this chamber in the midst of eHealth 2.0, the scandal, to divert attention away from Liberal waste and mispending. But this bill will not address consumer outrage. This government is instead using this bill to waste this Legislature's valuable time in this House and to avoid talking about the issues that have put Ontario into a have-not position in Confederation for the first time in over 100 years, issues

that have rapidly increased our provincial debt to record heights and issues that have seniors and Ontario families struggling to pay their bills as this government continues to raise their taxes and user fees through a myriad of different issues.

In fact, I'd like to bring attention to a Windsor Star article from Saturday entitled "Managing Money: Ranking the Premiers." I'll touch on that a little later. I have a copy of it here. I'm sure a number of people in this Legislature have read it, and I would recommend it to the viewers who are watching on CPaC, the Canadian parliamentary channel. It was in the Windsor Star, among a number of other articles, and it's called "Managing Money: Ranking the Premiers." The bottom line of that is that they rated all the provinces, and this province, this Premier and this government were rated as the poorest. They're right at the foot of the bed. From the head to the foot, they're at the foot of the bed, to use an old Lambton county axiom.

The article reads, "The Fraser Institute released a study that ranked the 10 Premiers as money managers—each received an overall score out of 100 based on their record on spending, taxes and debt and deficits. And, perhaps not surprisingly, the lowest ranking—29.7 out of 100—went to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty" and the Dalton McGuinty government.

I would like to highlight the comments of Terence Corcoran of the National Post in regard to Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. Mr. Corcoran's article was entitled "Ontario Panders to Ticket Myths." In this article, he states that this government is simply pandering to public perception. Well, surprise, surprise. Something that a number of people have accused this government of is pandering. They're great at that: pandering to every interest group across this province, from time to time; they're past masters at that stage.

He continued to write, "Attorney General Chris Bentley, answering the call of the blogosphere, last Wednesday introduced Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. The bill, aimed at Ticketmaster, is designed to fix a perceived problem that doesn't exist based on an analysis that is flawed with a law that doesn't do anything to fix the perception or respond to the flawed analysis. In government and politics, that's called productive work."

That's not what we would call that back in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, nor in, I'm sure, a lot of the members of the government's ridings. I'm sure if we went to small-town Ontario, anywhere in Ontario, this is what we would see.

"The perception is that Ticketmaster, an agency hired by rock groups, sports teams and others to handle ticket sales, is taking preferential advantage of its position and transferring tickets to its secondary market subsidiary, TicketsNow, where they are marked up to sky-high prices."

The fact is, there's no evidence, according to Mr. Corcoran, "that Ticketmaster favours its TicketsNow subsidiary." This is "more or less acknowledged right in

the government's Bill 172 press release. "The new provisions respond to public concern that companies may make tickets available for sale to the same events on the primary market and then on the secondary market, at a much higher price."

"Public concern about something is not a basis for legislation, especially when the legislation does nothing to alleviate the concern and may, in the end, make the local concert/sports event ticket-pricing situation worse. The new law also undermines competition in the ticket selling business. Why would the government want to do that?"

If we go back, and when you just think about it, if public concern about something is a basis for legislation, what about issues like contraband tobacco? What about Caledonia? There's lots of public concern there, but we don't see any legislation there. There are two examples, and there are a myriad of others out there that, if I thought about it long enough, I could probably come up with. There are some obvious opportunities for legislation that we would be prepared to support.

"The bill, in two pages"—two measly pages—"amends existing Ontario law that supposedly bans scalping in event tickets. Specifically, it would prohibit a primary seller (i.e., Ticketmaster) from dealing in the same tickets as a secondary seller (i.e., TicketsNow). The minister doesn't explain what the effect is of this change in the law, except to claim that it will return 'fairness' to the ticket market and 'protect consumers.'"

"The government by now knows that the public perception is wrong. Or if it has doubts, it also knows that the federal Competition Bureau is investigating this public perception. The least Mr. Bentley"—the Attorney General—"could do is wait for the Competition Bureau to report."

0920

I was reminded of a number of events when I was researching some of this. Some of the government members have said that this is just a modest bill, that it's not going to do very much. I thought, it's a modest bill with much to be modest about. You might say that about this government: It's a modest government with much to be modest about. It's also like a bait-and-switch routine, because we'd like to be debating the fall economic statement today, but we're not. Why? Because the fall economic statement isn't here. They're late on that assignment. Good thing we're not grading them, right, member from Thornhill?

Are we going to give them time to speak?

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, we're just killing time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Get rid of the speaking notes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I don't know what I'd say then. I'd better not; I might get myself in trouble.

This fall economic statement is delayed until Thursday. It's three days late. We could be talking about smart meters, the HST, health care, the Green Energy Act—ad infinitum. There's all kinds of issues out there. As a wag

said one time—I think it was actually Ronald Reagan who said it—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Ronald Reagan?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Ronald Reagan. So you're ready for this; the member from Peterborough is ready for this: "It's not that this government knows so little, but rather that they know so much that isn't true." I think that was true then, when Reagan said it, and I'm sure it's true today, when the member for Sarnia-Lambton says it. It looked like the member from Peterborough was enjoying that.

"The most famous example of alleged ticket manipulation is a Bruce Springsteen concert in New Jersey"—

Mr. Jeff Leal: You were there, weren't you, Bob?

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, no, and I didn't get to Woodstock either—Woodstock, New York. I think the member for Thornhill was there, though. He probably had the beads and the Volkswagen van. The member for Welland—I bet you the member for Welland was there. Peter will tell you, when he gets up. He'll go into that in great detail.

"TicketsNow appeared to have tickets even before they were available at Ticketmaster. Not only is it the most famous example, it is the only example, and one which Ticketmaster says was due to a local computer malfunction. If Ticketmaster had prematurely sold Springsteen tickets via TicketsNow, it would have been in breach of its contract with the Springsteen promoters.

"It is now conventional wisdom in the blog world, on radio call-in shows and in the newsrooms of the Toronto Star"—that famous journalism—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I won't quote the member for Thornhill—"and the CBC that Ticketmaster scalps its own products to TicketsNow. Ticketmaster's legal counsel, Joe Freeman, calls it 'an urban myth.' Still, on CBC Radio's *As It Happens* last week" the famous host "Carol Off belligerently went after Mr. Freeman for having the temerity to deny Ticketmaster's complicity in the ticket-scalping market."

The concert and sport event ticketing business is becoming increasingly complicated and sophisticated thanks to the Internet. Tickets for everything can be found with a simple Google search and a willingness to pay prices way above the official price. I'm sure that if they sold tickets for the show that goes on in here from time to time, there would probably be somebody out on the lawn at Queen's Park trying to market those. I don't know what the uptick would be on those tickets. Do you, member for Thornhill?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Twice as much.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Twice as much? Maybe. He said they'd be worth twice as much as what they're paying now.

In Toronto, the primary sellers include Ticketmaster, the Toronto Blue Jays, the Mirvish theatre group and other secondary players including StubHub, TicketsNorth—you have to be careful saying this one early in the morning: Ticket Liquidator, Ticket Express,

GoTickets and others. Ticket Liquidator reminds me of the guy who had the itchy Twitter finger.

Ticketmaster is the only primary seller that owns a secondary seller. The Ontario legislation effectively singles out Ticketmaster and would prevent it from operating in the secondary market, where it essentially acts as an Internet-based broker between buyers and sellers. The real money is made by the scalpers and traders. TicketsNow collects a fee on transactions but does not own or control any tickets.

The Attorney General, Mr. Bentley, "apparently doesn't believe Ticketmaster. Otherwise, why would he bring in a law that effectively bars Ticketmaster from competing in the secondary market? No doubt the owners of StubHub and scores of other Internet-based scalping agencies are going to be happy.

"All of this is taking place under an existing law that makes scalping illegal. The amendment, in other words, will prevent Ticketmaster from engaging in an activity that the law already officially prohibits but does not stop. It's tough to explain, but it's what people want, the minister says." Great. This is the minister speaking: "Ontarians have spoken out clearly, resoundingly and unequivocally against companies benefiting from the primary and secondary markets." So says the Attorney General.

There are any number of companies that sell or resell tickets. The ones that are controversial are obviously the tickets that are sold above face value—I heard when the member for Timmins-James Bay talked about buying tickets under the market with his father to attend a hockey game a number of years ago in Toronto—while many tickets in Ontario are sold at reduced prices because the venues aren't full. It's supply and demand. But for tickets that sell for greatly inflated prices, they are already breaking the law as it now stands in Ontario. You can't sell tickets above face value—it's called scalping—and the laws in Ontario prevent scalping, or are supposed to, if it takes place.

If the government is actually serious about this problem, why don't they just enforce some of the anti-scalping laws that already exist in this province, like a lot of other laws that should be enforced in this province, like I said, about contraband tobacco or legal occupations that are ongoing for four years-plus? Maybe it's just because they don't know how or they don't have the political will, or maybe it's just because there's no will to do it at the end of the day.

Today, some statistics suggest that almost 50%—I think it's higher than that—of the cigarettes sold in Ontario are sold without taxes. They are illegal cigarettes and yet this government can't find these smoke shacks that they are sold from or don't seem to be able to find the tractor-trailer trucks, RVs and trunks of cars where they are sold from on construction sites and other sites around this province. This government simply doesn't enforce the current law in the same way that they don't enforce the scalping laws in the province of Ontario.

I see my time coming to an end. I know there's something else I wanted to say, but I don't have it right

here in front of me. At this point, I'm going to relinquish the rest of my time to the member for Thornhill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Another time allocation motion from this government that has so little regard for process here in this Parliament—a government House leader who has an addiction to the guillotine motion; a government that stifles debate at every single opportunity, using every tool available to them and available to them only because of the brute force of their majority; a government that should be very respectful of its majority because it may well not be long-lasting.

The sartorial parliamentary assistant arrives, looking rather dapper. Relax. He's here to work, not to model for Harry Rosen.

While this government has available to it the time allocation motion that it can force through because of its majority—as a matter of fact, this perhaps is the reason for this government's zeal, its passion, its absolute enamourment with time allocation: because they know that you can only make them work when you have a majority, and the majority over here, on this government side, is rather short-lived.

When 76% of Ontarians say they would like to see another party in power, that's pretty potent electoral stuff, isn't it? When 86% of Ontarians say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, there's a whole lot of government backbenchers who should be focusing on preparing resumé's rather than revelling in their short-lived majority.

0930

This is remarkable. I've never seen these numbers before—ever. Even when Mr. Rae was tanking, the numbers weren't this bad. And there are margins of error. Let's assume for a moment that on the 76% of respondents who say they would like to see another party in power, there's a four-point margin of error.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It could be 80%.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It could be 72%, or, yes, as the member from Trinity-Spadina said—because he's a teacher, he understands these things and the mathematics of them—it could be 80%. At 80%, you folks will make the federal Tory of—who was that two-person team that was the Tory rump? The wonderful Elsie—

Interjection: Elsie Wayne.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Elsie Wayne—

Interjection: Jean Charest.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —and Jean Charest. Of course, that's before he became a Liberal. But then again, one of the nice things about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a Liberal. We see that frequently when it comes to policy and positioning on the part of this government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You can get a job with two parties.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right. Jean Charest became a Liberal after being a Tory, including, remem-

ber, that he was a candidate for leadership. Tory, Liberal; Liberal, Tory—it's the same old story.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The same old story.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He notes.

To those government members who are defeated in the upcoming election, I wish them well. This has nothing to do with arrogance. It has to do with being around here a few rounds and seeing governments get defeated. I've watched it at a very intimate level. I've smelled the fear permeating the caucus room. I've seen the anxiety. I've seen and heard the party leader, the Premier, who says, "There's still a year; it's a long time to go," and who says, "Look, we've got to have a united, consistent voice. Folks, you can't appear to be feuding with each other or to be divided. We can't have anybody breaking rank. We've got to stick to message, stick to message, stick to message. As a matter of fact, we've got the message written down for you. Here it is; it's a three-parter. This is what you say about the Liberals, this is what you say about the Conservatives and this is what you say about the New Democrats." Whether it's true or not is irrelevant, because it's called spin. You guys have got more spin cycles than a Maytag, and the problem is, you're not particularly opaque about it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Transparent?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Exactly.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Or opaque?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, they're not opaque; they're transparent.

Interjection: Translucent.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I almost heard the heckle from the Liberal as "lucid." Far from it, because lucidity takes a backseat to raw emotion when you've got 76% of Ontarians saying that they would like to see another party in power.

I've heard a government backbencher interject that it's only 76%. Well, how much more would you like it to be? What kind of numbers are you aiming for? Are you going for 99.9%, like 99.9% pure Ivory Snow, the marketers' sort of spin? Are you going for the full monty? Good grief. Surely there are a couple of members over there who will refuse to lemming themselves.

The problem is, when people learn about the use of these time allocation bills, it's my suspicion—time will tell, but it's my suspicion—that you entrench that 76% of people who say they would like to see another party in power, because the government displays itself to be arrogant and aloof and disdainful of process and to have no regard, for instance, for the opportunity of members of the public to participate in the process at committee hearings. One of the sad things that I note about this assembly over the course of the last 22 or 23 years that I've been fortunate enough to be here is that the committee, an incredibly valuable tool for engaging the public—it is—has become less and less relevant.

Take a look at what your bill does. Take a look at what your time allocation motion does. You restrict committee hearings to Thursday, November 25, and Wednesday, December 1, and then you return on Decem-

ber 2 for clause-by-clause. So you've got a few hours on Thursday and you've got a few hours on Wednesday, December 1, and then it's over. You slam the door in the face of members of the public who want to participate in this discussion.

Now, I've got a feeling, because it seems to me just from reflecting on the debate that's taken place here, that there's at least one member here who is a Ticketmaster-TicketsNow spokesperson, and I'm drawing inferences based on what that member has said. As I told you folks last time I was speaking to this bill during second reading, I got calls from at least one lobbyist on this matter, and I declined to answer those calls because I do not want to be in the back pocket of any particular lobbyist or interest, although I find myself as critical of this legislation as any of the other critics of the legislation here in the chamber, because it very much appears there's only one player that this bill is directed at, and that's Ticketmaster and their—it's not a partner—owned operation, TicketsNow.

This bill will not end scalping. This bill will not end reselling by sophisticated computer-driven resellers. This bill will not end the outrageous prices being charged for tickets by resalers; even those prices at the onset are incredibly high. You heard me note that, because I had a chance to, I actually went to Ticketmaster's website; I think it was Ticketmaster, yes. It's amazing what people are paying for tickets to these events. For U2 at the Rogers Centre, they're paying up to \$265, and that's face value. That's not face value plus commission; it's not scalping price. The Toronto Raptors versus the Golden State Warriors at the Air Canada Centre, court-side: \$1,120. That's the face value; it's not the scalped value.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How much, again?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's \$1,120, and it's per ticket, per seat. Mind you, there are cheaper seats. As a matter of fact, I've not been to the Air Canada Centre, but there's what they call the gondola seating. That's \$38. Just the image of a gondola: You're up somewhere way, way high up in the rafters, swinging off some beams with wires. I don't know how they use a cherry-picker to get you up there. It's pretty hard to see that basketball from the gondola seating.

Well, Lady Gaga—I thought my colleague from Trinity-Spadina would be interested.

0940

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I've seen her, yeah.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He has.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I mean, you know, pictures and stuff.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They're \$191, and that's face value.

And Justin Bieber trails the pack at \$71. But I'll tell you, if you've got three teenage daughters and you've got to cough up \$71 apiece plus all of the other stuff, it's a heck of a night.

So there you go. It's remarkable how much people are prepared to pay, because those are the face values. As I told you before, I haven't been to one of these. The last

big concert I went to, I told you, was Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia down at Rich Stadium. It was a Sunday afternoon. I remember very little of it except I know it was a great concert. I was much younger then, but that's the last time I went to a large concert like that. I've been to Massey Hall from time to time.

Gosh, I remember when the Royal York Hotel had its Imperial Room and people like Ella Fitzgerald would go there: a very small venue, very traditional night club venue—great stuff. But nobody ever paid prices like this. What it seems is that this is what the market will bear. If you want to put scalpers out of business, I say to consumers, don't buy their tickets. Don't pay for them.

There's a debate coming up, I think at Roy Thomson Hall, between Christopher Hitchens and Tony Blair on the existence of God or the role of faith or religion. Hitchens, of course, is the strongly opinionated atheist and Blair is a new convert to Catholicism. The face value of those tickets, I'm told, was up around \$80, but they're being scalped now for up to \$300—to listen to two old men argue about whether or not God exists.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: As my friend from Trinity-Spadina says, you can go down to Cafe Diplomatico on College Street and listen to two old men argue that any day of the week, for free.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Have a good coffee cheap—

Mr. Peter Kormos: For the price of an espresso. If you want to hear two old men argue about the existence of God, go down to Little Italy on College Street and drop in at any of the coffee houses, or for that matter, go to Dooney's new place.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. My brother is no longer there—Annex Live.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes, Annex Live, and you can hear two old men argue about whether or not God exists.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Actually more professor types.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Perhaps more professor types.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're not turning on the Liberals; they're not listening, Peter. What's going on?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's your job to turn them on. I'm going to cede the floor to you in relatively short order.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't get it. Look at that; they're talking.

Mr. Peter Kormos: They're lifeless this morning. I would be too. They seem depressed.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Flaccid.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But he's perpetually happy. He's never had a grumpy day in his life. I've been here to witness it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He's got a little bowtie. It's the bowtie that makes him happy, I think.

Mr. Peter Kormos: When 76% of Ontarians say they want somebody else in power, that's depressing stuff. It could lead to all sorts of bizarre behaviours.

Hope I got this story right. It's the story about the newly elected Premier, and when he goes into the Premier's office, he finds three envelopes on the desk.

Hon. John Milloy: Oh, please, Peter. We've heard that one so many times.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do you know that one?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a good story. Stick around. There are people listening who haven't.

The predecessor says, "Pick envelope 1, 2 and 3. As your first crisis comes about, open envelope number 1, and then envelope number 2 and then envelope number 3." So the first crisis came about and envelope number 1 said, "Blame the previous government." The second crisis came about, and what did it say?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: "Blame Ottawa"; that's right. And then the third crisis came about, and you open the envelope and the little message says, "Prepare three envelopes for your successor"—you see.

You laughed the first time you heard it. That's before you had 76% of Ontarians saying they wanted another party to govern the province. You enjoyed—if there is such a thing as enjoying as compared to enduring your suffering—hubris, because you can only enjoy hubris for a short while, then you suffer it.

The bill is not going to end scalping. It will jam up Ticketmaster and—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: StubHub, TicketsNow.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —TicketsNow. It'll jam them up.

I'm interested in seeing them in committee. For the life of me, I don't know why their lobbyists haven't been working harder or more successfully with the government. It's clear that whoever the operators of Ticketmaster are—I don't even know if that's a publicly traded company or a closely held company, I don't know whether it's family owned, but we'll see what they've done to have earned the ire of Mr. McGuinty's office, because this stuff doesn't happen without Mr. McGuinty's office approving it. So I hope there's time for them to appear at committee. As a matter of fact, they'll be the only person that will have to be there, because it's all about them. Scalpers are not scared by this bill one iota.

We were told by the capable parliamentary assistant that it's the system of buying tickets on computers that allows resellers to buy huge blocks. I suspect more so that it's like in the travel industry, where travel packagers buy blocks of hotel rooms and buy blocks of airline seats. The airline is more than happy to sell them to them, because at least they've got the cash up front, I presume, and they're guaranteed of having those seats sold. Hoteliers are more than pleased to deal with these people because they know that those hotel rooms are going to be paid for, have been paid for, and they could care less what the reseller sells them for—other than the fact that they might learn that they've been undercharging.

By the way, we're going to vote against this time allocation motion. I've never supported one in this Legislature ever, ever, ever. My colleague from Trinity—

Spadina will be using the rest of the time when it comes time for him to speak to this.

It's not just a modest bill; there's modest and then there's pathetic. This falls more under the "Ps" for pathetic.

Nobody purposely misled, do you understand that, Speaker? Because if I were to say that anybody misled, that would be unparliamentary and I would have to withdraw it. If I say the public has been misled, I withdraw that, but there's certainly been a misimpression created that this is going to end high-end, sophisticated ticket scalping, like what happens on computer websites all over Ontario, Canada and North America, and it simply won't. It deals only with when there is a direct relationship between a reseller and a primary seller. We're told that there's only one company—there could be more; we could learn about this—that has that type of relationship between themselves as a primary seller and a reseller, and that's Ticketmaster.

So there we go. The bill may not even get proclaimed, because in any event, it's just a little bit of spin. It has been around over a year and a half. It hasn't had much traction, as I say, in that time. It's not even worthy of a time allocation motion, so this government's obviously got time on its hands.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: It looks to me like the Liberals don't want to debate their own time allocation motion, but that's fine.

I want to begin today by thanking the government House leader for introducing the time allocation motion because, unlike my esteemed friend from Welland, I think it's high time that we put this bill out of its misery. This is a bill that has been debated for the last couple of days, but has been around for the last many, many months. For what reason? No one in this House seems to know.

Even more curious is the fact that it doesn't seem to be large in the public interest, in the minds of people out there. I get a lot of mail and email, interventions of one sort or another, in my constituency office in Thornhill, as do every one of you seated in this House, and I haven't had any intervention whatsoever on the part of the people who sent me here to this place to represent them about this particular bill. I came to Queen's Park to debate real issues.

0950

As everyone knows in this House, there already is a Ticket Speculation Act in existence, and that act prohibits the reselling of tickets above the ticket's value. The act is not being enforced and these new provisions will not be enforced either, and that's what's so ridiculous about debating this bill.

What does this tell us? It tells us that we're in the waning weeks of the period leading up to the holiday break and that the government of the day is devoid of legislation that has any real meaning so it's falling back on spending literally millions of dollars keeping this

palace open so that we can talk about something that doesn't really benefit anyone. It reminds me of other kinds of legislation that we've debated here.

Let's suppose that when—because it is a “when”—this legislation passes, we actually want to protect people from the illicit sale of tickets at a greater price than what their market value is. You have to enforce that. That's the problem with legislation so often brought by this Liberal government of Premier McGuinty: You pass legislation which purports to protect me.

I want to start by saying that my caucus has nothing to say in negative terms about protecting consumers. Consumer protection is a great idea. But in this particular case, what are you protecting me from with this bill, (a) if you are not going to enforce it, and (b) if it's an entirely voluntary act on my part?

I remember when Barbra Streisand was going to perform at the Air Canada Centre. There was a question in my family, as my wife is a big Barbra Streisand fan—me, not so much—and she seemed to really want to go. At that point, the tickets were sold out. The issue was, “Do you really want to go to Barbra Streisand? Because if you do, we'll go down there to the Air Canada Centre and there will be some guy in a leather jacket out in front of the Air Canada Centre and he'll be saying ‘Got tickets? You got tickets?’”

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A thousand bucks.

Mr. Peter Shurman: A thousand bucks. And if I really wanted her to go to Barbra Streisand, I would have taken 10 \$100 bills out of my pocket—given that I actually had 10 \$100 bills in my pocket—and I would have bought her the ticket. Let the buyer beware. If I want to pay \$1,000 for Barbra Streisand, okay, and if I don't want to go, I don't go. That's my consumer protection.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My Liberal friends, although you can't hear it on the microphone, people watching at home, are taunting me because they think I'm a cheapskate for not having come up with \$1,000 for my wife. The bottom line is, that's the silliness of the debate that we're in: that we're actually looking at passing legislation that's going to protect nobody, because those people in front of the Air Canada Centre, which is where the real movement of tickets goes on, are not going anywhere. They're not controlled now, they never have been and they never will be.

This reminds me of a number of other things that have gone through this House over the last little while. I began by saying that people in Thornhill had sent me here to debate their business and that nobody had made any representation to me whatsoever on the issue of whether or not they supported or didn't support this bill.

I look at the time allocation motion that was read in the House this morning by the government House leader, “That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet in Toronto on Thursday, November 25, 2010, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of public hearings and in Toronto on Wednesday,

December 1, 2010, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and in Toronto on Thursday, December 2, 2010, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.”—public hearings on a bill that really isn't of very much interest to anybody, with the exception, perhaps, of Ticketmaster. I recall, not so many months ago in this chamber, how much noise we had to make to get a modicum of public hearings on a subject like the HST, a subject on which every single member in this House had plenty of interventions in their office. So what interests this government and what doesn't?

Later this week, I'm speaking to a group that has a great interest in contraband tobacco: the Ontario Convenience Stores Association. These are people—and I'm not digressing from the bill, because there's a great parallel here. This is exactly like the contraband tobacco issue. This government has gone to great lengths to continually modify and add to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act over a period of time, something with which, in principle, we don't disagree, but it doesn't enforce very much of it, with the exception of that small unit of legal tobacco sales. So the tobacco enforcement group, the officers who enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, constantly visit convenience stores to enforce the Smoke-Free Ontario Act there, but they have orders—and we know they have orders. We've seen articles in the paper even lately that say, “You don't go into the smoke shacks; you don't go on to the native reserves.” You don't even apparently go into the parking lots across from high schools, where there's some guy who's just as sleazy as those people selling tickets outside of the Air Canada Centre selling tobacco out of his trunk to kids who would otherwise be carded by the convenience store associations.

What's the parallel here? That you've got strong legislation that protects people from illicit tobacco use and protects our children? Nonsense. We don't have that. We don't have that because we don't have enforcement in the precise areas where we need it, and the result is 50%—maybe even more by now—of tobacco sales in the province of Ontario are illegal tobacco sales, way larger than any other province in Canada.

So now we're going to have legislation that protects us from the unscrupulous people who want to sell us tickets to events at elevated prices when you have no enforcement whatsoever. What's the difference? There's no requirement for that at all.

It's amazing when I think of—I've been here just a little over three years now.

Mr. John O'Toole: It seems longer.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It seems longer, my friend from Durham says. You're right: It does some days, and today is one of them.

Another issue that's surfacing right now that illustrates what this government has done in terms of enacting legislation that, at the end of the day, is really of no force and effect, other than perhaps negative—and this is starting to scare me. Not many months ago, we dealt with a change that resulted in the denial of a particular mode of payment to pharmacists all across Ontario for the sale

of generic drugs. The generic drug manufacturers paid pharmacists 20%. Some people called it a kickback, a pejorative word; other people called it a commission. It didn't matter; it seemed to work for the industry. But the government denied that opportunity and said, "That can't happen anymore," because it looked like, and the government sold it as, a benefit to the people of Ontario.

Guess what's happening now? There are a number of molecules, drug formulations, that are not available, period. They're not available in any pharmacy because generic drug manufacturers, on the non-profitable items, have stopped manufacturing them. What are people discovering? Are drugs cheaper? No. They're getting the brand name prescribed by the doctor and the drug insurers are reimbursing at the value of the generic. In many cases, people aren't getting the drugs they need at all.

That's how this government legislates. It legislates first and it looks at the results afterwards, and the results are negative. If you think that's negative on the drug issue, I've been told by people who are much more in the know than me—I'm talking about medical people—that over the course of the coming winter—and it's just around the corner; let's face it—when people's resistance is down, these strains of bacteria that are highly drug-resistant will elevate in the population by a dramatic amount because of the fact that the correct antibiotics or any antibiotics will not be effective against these things. So we'll be hurting, indeed, we may be killing, more Ontarians because of legislation that purported to protect them.

I am trying to illustrate that this legislation, the legislation pertaining to drugs, the legislation pertaining to tobacco, always is brought forward in this House with a view by this Liberal government that says, "We are here to protect you," and, at the end of the day, results in no protection of any sort. In fact, it could result in harm—it will in the drug community, and already is; it will and is in the area of tobacco; and in this particular case, thank goodness we're only talking about tickets, because with tickets, if you don't get them or if you have to pay too much for them, you have a choice and you won't be injured. You won't have life and limb threatened.

1000

The problem is that this bill will do nothing to improve customer protection for my constituents in Thornhill, who did send me here to represent them, who did send me here to do their business, and who did send me here with no idea that this legislation would be there and no concern that it is. This legislation targets but one group of ticket sellers, and ignores others, like brokers and like the scalpers I talked about out in front of the Air Canada Centre. It will drive the market underground, where there is less consumer protection, and that's the concern.

So why are we debating this bill now? Well, because according to the legislative calendar we have about three weeks before this House breaks for the holidays, and then we're not here for the duration of December; for about three, three and a half or four weeks in December we

won't be here; we won't be here all of January, and if the government maintains the schedule that is published, won't be here until February 22. That's the period of time that we'll be gone. Somehow or other, this government is looking to fill three weeks with debate on one thing or another. So we're talking about this bill; we'll be discussing Bill 99, the activities tax credit, this afternoon; we'll be finishing up on the Water Opportunities Act; and I don't know of any other legislation that exists. So quite frankly, to the government House leader, I don't know how you're going to get past this week. You'd better come up with some new legislation to protect me from me very soon, because that's what it is you excel at.

I have another example that I'd like to raise, that goes back to the early days for me, three years ago, that opened the door to what it is they're trying to do. That was the pesticides bill. I've cited this as an example many times during debate in this House as something that opened my eyes to how this government works. The government brought in the pesticides bill, originally, under the guise of protecting Ontarians from the scourge of pesticides: "We're going to ban 100% of pesticide use in the province of Ontario." When I asked a question of the then environment minister, Mr. Gerretsen, in this House, on why he was doing that, he said, "It's to protect the children. We have to protect the children." Hard-hearted me, I don't want to protect any children? Well, of course I want to protect children. If that was really what that legislation was going to effect, then I would have supported it. But if you read between the lines—which is why we get sent to this place. We have to read between the lines; we have to interpret the legislation; we have to do what 160,000 people in Thornhill don't have the time to do, which is interpret for them in 10 seconds what it is that we're voting for or voting against. Why would I hurt their children by not voting for the pesticides bill? I'll tell you. Because the pesticides bill started out by saying, "We're going to ban the use of pesticides in the province of Ontario." And oh, by the way, if you read between the lines, "We're going to exempt 98.5% of those pesticides from the ban."

Mr. Toby Barrett: What about the farm children?

Mr. Peter Shurman: My friend from Haldimand-Norfolk says, "What about the farm children? Don't we protect them, too?" And that's exactly right. Because what we did is we saw exemptions in that bill from the use of pesticides in agriculture, on golf courses, in forestry, in hydro rights of way, along railway rights of way—all of that—so actually, in the name of banning 100% of pesticides, we banned 1.5% of the use of pesticides. And do you know what those pesticides were? Basically it was 2,4-D, which is the primary active ingredient that was used by the Weed Man and GreenLawn to make my lawn green but, more importantly, to keep me from suffering an asthma attack or an allergy attack, which I've been suffering for the past couple of years after not having suffered from it for 30—and that goes for an awful lot of other people as well—to protect the children. So again, an example just like this of legislating for legislating's sake. That is not why we're here.

What we are here to do is to take a look at what best serves the people of Ontario. In this time, in this place, using a very expensive medium, which is the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, we should be talking about the people's business. My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton not too many moments ago in debate mentioned the fact that the fall economic statement was due no later than the beginning of this week and now we've been told that it couldn't be prepared on time; we're going to get it on Thursday. It will be an interesting statement to look at because the people's business that we should be talking about here, that we should be talking about now, isn't whether or not a ticket is too expensive. Most people, at the regular prices of tickets at the box office, are having problems buying them. Why? Because this government, to address its own unbridled spending habits, has spent most of the time, the real time, in this Legislature enacting tax after tax and sometimes slipping it in, like the eco taxes, under the radar when they were hitting us doubly hard with HST.

I talked about the concerns of the people of Thornhill not too long ago. When I asked for interest in whether or not this is a good, bad or indifferent bill, I got nothing. When I asked for interest on whether or not the HST was a good, bad or indifferent idea, I got several hundred people at a meeting. I got a Liberal member from Ottawa Centre out in Thornhill talking to people who are in condominiums to try to sell them on the fact that it was great, and he got booed.

When we asked for public hearings on this side on the HST, what did we get? We got this, only you have to choose the one you like best. That's what we got. I know I'm skirting the line, Speaker. The point I'm trying to make is that the real business of this House is to deal, on the part of people who represent 13 million others and who have the privilege of sitting in this chamber, with real issues of the day.

The real issue of today, the real issue that we have to address right now, is not whether a ticket costs more or whether this bill is going to protect us from that ticket costing more than it should. We've already established that it's not. I don't think we've even got any disagreement from the Liberal ranks.

What we have to deal with here and now is the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario who have not gone back to work so they're not buying a ticket to anything. What we have to deal with now is an economy that is not in any kind of shape compared to sister provinces in Canada. What we have to deal with now is a province that has become a have-not province from a have province notwithstanding the fact that in land mass and in population, we are the ranking province in the country. This is the sad fact.

But what are we doing in the Legislature? We're talking about whether or not somebody has to pay too much for a Barbra Streisand ticket because an unscrupulous person has gotten a hold of it. This bill doesn't even address that; it addresses Ticketmaster and a sister company or eBay and a sister company. That's not what this place is about.

As I began, I will end: Thank you to the government House leader for introducing this time allocation motion. Let's put this bill out of its misery.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I take a different point of view from my two friends from Sarnia-Lambton and Thornhill because I actually think this is an important bill to debate. The problem is, as the member from Welland said, we're not debating this bill, not just because we're cutting it short today, as an issue, but also because we're not going to allow much debate or discussion because we have curtailed the number of people that could come to speak to the bill.

The motion clearly gives the public two days to come and give their presentation, and in those two days they only have a couple of hours. This suggests to me the government wants to get this out of the way as quickly as possible. But in my view, this is an important bill to talk about. It is about speculation. Someone is speculating out there. Someone is making a whole lot of pecunia out of these kinds of events. We should be dealing with it.

My Conservative friends are right that this bill will not get to the bottom of it, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be debating the bill. We should be talking about amendments to the bill, and we should be making sure that a whole lot of people come to those committee hearings.

Now, what we normally do in subcommittee is discuss how many days we should give to hearings. In the good old days of the 1990 government, the then Bob Rae government, now turned Liberal, we used to have hearings that lasted for a month. We would give every opportunity to our friends and foes to come and beat us up on a daily basis. A whole month we would give to debate bills. Those were public hearings. We wanted people to tell us what they thought about the bills.

1010

Today, we get two days, if we're lucky. Two days, for a couple of hours each day. Those are not public hearings. You are circumscribing the bill and circumscribing the number of people who could come to speak to the bill, and that is wrong. That tells me you don't even take your bill seriously. You want to pretend you're doing something when in actual fact you're doing so very little, because it doesn't get to deal with the real problem.

I have to tell you, I know a whole lot of people who want to attend cultural and sports events in their communities. The Olympics are a big deal for a whole lot of people. It's not for some, but they're a big deal for a whole lot of Canadians. Yes, music and concerts are as important as ever to young and old people—not so much me. I've got to admit, I'm a pretty boring guy. I used to love to sing Tom Jones. I wouldn't mind watching him on television, but to pay the big bucks to watch him live—you wouldn't catch me paying money to see Tom Jones giving away his shorts or whatever else he was giving. I just wouldn't do that. I don't know how women enjoy that kind of stuff, but God bless. They went—they

still do, and he's still good at it, at his 60 years of age. God bless him. He's still doing okay. But I wouldn't pay the big, big bucks to watch my friend Tom Jones, whom I imitated for three long years.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Imitated?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes.

The point is, I love a good soccer game as anybody else does. I really do—more than hockey, more than basketball, more than tennis, more than golf, more than anything else you could talk about. But to think that somehow I would go pay the big bucks to watch these soccer players—I'm just not going to do that; I think it's insane. But there are people who do; there are. A whole lot of adults are pressured by their sons and daughters to go to these concerts, to go to these games—basketball, soccer, football or hockey; whatever it is. They're under tremendous pressure to buy the tickets to those concerts for their children. I'll bet a whole lot of MPPs are probably nodding when I say that, because young people want to go. Martin Bieber, a nice young man—I wouldn't go to see Martin Bieber myself, but I know that there are a whole lot of young kids who like this young man.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Justin Bieber.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Justin Bieber. Thank you, Doc. That's why you're here.

There are a whole lot of people who want to pay the big bucks to see this young man perform. God bless. But I say ordinary men and women, modest-income people, spend a whole lot of money that, in some cases, they do not have to go to these concerts, to go to these games.

I personally think we've got to lower those prices. I would boycott these games and these concerts. I would do that. Bring the price down so that modest-income people can enjoy these things that they love to see.

This bill doesn't deal with it. I understand. That's why I'm making the argument to people that the way to bring the price down is to boycott them. That'll get to the brokers; that'll get to TicketsNow, StubHub or any other term for any one of these resale organizations that exist. That's the way we bring them down, if we have to, so that we can make life affordable to people.

To boot, we now have the HST on top of those tickets. Now we've got McGuinty saying, "Not only are those tickets unaffordable, but we're going to put 8% on those tickets to make it really more unaffordable." By the way, those fine brokers that are out there buying by the thousands, wherever they are, whether they're in Ontario, New Brunswick or Alberta, who can buy tickets electronically, and they do, those people are still going to buy those tickets and resell them at incredibly high prices.

This bill doesn't get to deal with that either. This bill ends the relationship that exists between Ticketmaster and TicketsNow, the resale organization, but that's not the end of the problem. You've got scalpers, little guys, trying to make a few bucks. Would I go after some of those guys? They're little guys, in my mind. They're making a few dollars and making a living. But those are not the people who have a big pecuniary interest in the resale market. The brokers that are making the big

bucks—those are the people who are jacking up the price two, three, four and five times the value of the original ticket. Those are the people we've got to go after, and this government doesn't seem too keen or interested in telling us how, through the hearings, we can invite the public, good doctor, to give us their judgment, their wisdom, on how we get to solve this problem. So you introduce your little bill that does a little something and then you kill it by giving the public a couple of hours of debate, by bringing them to give them five or 10 minutes, and you end it. Why do you do that? Why do you continue to disappoint me over and over again?

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): On that note, the House will stand adjourned until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd just like to welcome a good friend from Burlington, Ontario, who came here today: Marilynn Heinz. I'd like to welcome her to the Legislature today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature members of the Métis Nation of Ontario. In recognition of the 125th anniversary of Louis Riel's death, there will be a special ceremony and a reception in rooms 228 and 230, beginning about 12:30, to which all are invited.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to introduce page Jennifer Boothby's parents, Carol Ann Boothby and Bob Boothby, who are in the public gallery. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Don Valley East and page Miguel Agudelo, to welcome his mother, Lucia Henao, to the public galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome a group visiting us today from the county of Elgin. They will be touring the Legislative Building. They are: Clayton Watters, Jim Carter, Cole Aicken, John Kersten, John Smith, Ernie Schned and Mike Westelaken. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

I'd also like to draw the members' attention to the Speaker's gallery to welcome the Right Reverend Dennis Drainville, Lord Bishop of Quebec and former member from Victoria–Haliburton in the 35th Parliament. Welcome back to Queen's Park today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to ask the pages to assemble for introduction, please.

I'd ask all members to please join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the second session of the 39th Parliament: Miguel Agudelo, Don Valley East; Jennifer Boothby, Etobicoke Centre; William Boulter, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound; Drew Brennan, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington; Sarah Charnock, Newmarket-Aurora; Casey Connor, Burlington; Jake Fell, Peterborough; Kyle Fitzgerald, Oshawa; Breana Hooks, London North Centre; Gabriella Howes, Windsor-Tecumseh; Emily Hryb, Bramalea-Gore-Malton; Mahir Malik, York West; Kira Kuzemchuk, Kenora-Rainy River; Tony Mistak, Halton; Alexandra Oleiche, Hamilton Mountain; Justin Patel, Parkdale-High Park; Vithuran Sukumar, Mississauga-Brampton South; Joshua Tuner, Durham; Donna Wang, Thornhill; Elizabeth Wilson, Wellington-Halton Hills; and Connor Wood, Scarborough-Guildwood. Welcome to all of you.

VISITOR

Mr. Joe Dickson: I guess I was not quite tall enough to be seen before, so I do apologize.

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce someone special to the Legislature, one of the many children of Susan and Wayne Arthurs; I can't mention their names, so I will say that they are from the riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Their son Joel is with us, and seated beside him is his very young-looking father.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday you gave a brand new explanation of why Ontario families have seen their hydro bills almost double since Premier McGuinty took office. The energy minister said hydro bills are going up because hydro meters are crumbling on walls and poles across the province, and now your new smart meter is simply catching people who had it too easy. So I ask the minister, exactly how many meters have succumbed to crumbling hydro meter syndrome?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've been saying for some time now that electricity prices are going up; we've been very upfront about that. There's a good reason for it: We're modernizing our energy system. We're investing in modernizing our energy system to make it more reliable and more efficient. We've added new supply to ensure our homes, our schools, our hospitals and our businesses have the power that they need. Smart meters are a very important part of that modernization. They provide more accurate information to customers and allow them to better manage their usage. They provide timely information to local utilities so that they can deal with outages in a much better way.

1040

We're the only party here that's been upfront about the fact that costs are going up. In the past, political parties of all stripes haven't been true on this issue with Ontarians. Prices are going up. Both opposition parties try to play the game, to pretend that that's not the case—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think families would like to learn more of the minister's theory of crumbling hydro meter syndrome; that they're falling off of walls and hydro poles across the province. In fact, with all due respect to the minister, this is probably his most—how should I say it?—creative excuse yet to date.

The real problem, Minister, is with your new smart meter tax machines. Measurement Canada has said there are measurement problems with your hydro meters, which you've turned into nothing more than tax machines on the backs of Ontario seniors and families. Ontario PCs have the right approach, to freeze the program in place until you fix these problems and to give Ontario families a choice: Do they want to be on time-of-use smart meters or not?

Minister, did you just make up your latest theory to confuse families or will you finally do the right thing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The last person we're going to take advice from when it comes to time of use would be the Leader of the Opposition. He stands in his place, day after day here in this Legislature, and talks about concern about rising costs, yet he comes forward with an initiative that would create a duplicate billing system; an initiative that would pile an entire amount of administration and costs onto local distribution companies; an initiative that wouldn't cause prices to go down; an initiative that would jack prices up to consumers across this province. It's very clear: Those guys didn't know what they were doing seven years ago when it came to our power system. They still don't know. They still don't get it. The only idea they've come up with would cause rates to go up. The last person we're going to take advice from when it comes to time of use will be the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, as you know, energy analysts are finding your recent claim of crumbling hydro meter syndrome rather bizarre, to say the least. They're saying that existing meters were highly tested and highly reliable. Minister, it's not crumbling hydro meters that are the problem, it's Premier McGuinty's generous subsidies to Korea-based Samsung and expensive energy experiments. It's your hidden tax on hydro bills. It's your greedy HST tax grab and your smart meters that are driving families' bills through the roof.

Minister, will you stop making things up on the fly, do the right thing, freeze the program until you fix it and give every Ontario family a choice whether they want to have one of your smart meter time-of-use machines or not?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's time to cut through the political rhetoric. Let's hear from somebody outside of

this Legislature, somebody who is an honoured expert in these matters. That's Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. This is what Gord Miller had to say, our Environmental Commissioner: "It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity, or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. It's important to hear the questions and the answers.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't mind when they heckle me, but when they're heckling the Environmental Commissioner's quote, that really tells you they really don't want to hear the facts. I'll start over: "It's been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity, or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted." He goes on to say, "Going back to the same-old same-old that did not work is not the answer."

I agree with the Environmental Commissioner. I do not agree with this guy's approach, which would take us back to where we were seven years ago.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Energy, whose smart meter tax machines are hitting families when they're getting the kids ready for school every day and when they're home from work, cooking meals and trying to get the kids to do homework. You know that not every family fits Dalton McGuinty's definition of an ideal family.

Also, I want to bring to the minister's attention that on every bill, Ontario families are paying a debt retirement charge for a debt on generation projects that were built as far back as the Peterson era. The debt was \$7.8 billion when Ontario families started paying it. They have now been paying it for eight years. Minister, exactly how much is left on the debt retirement charge, given that families have been paying for eight years?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That member and his party put a debt retirement charge on every Ontarian's bill in 1999—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just ask all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's coming from both sides.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd prefer we talk about questions and answers, and not about what somebody wants to have for lunch.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In 1999, they put the debt retirement charge on every Ontarian's bill, and between

1999 and 2003, when they were turfed from power, they didn't use one penny of that to pay down the debt. They diverted it to a price freeze. They diverted it away from that. When we came to office we began to apply it, and every year we have put \$1 billion on to that debt.

They want to go back to debt retirement charges; we're eliminating the debt. They don't want to be straight up with the people of Ontario; we are. We're going to pay down—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: With all due respect, Minister, to use parliamentary language, what a bunch of horse feathers.

Look at your own OEFC reports that show, from 2002 until 2009-10—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. Stop the clock, please. I would just say to the honourable Minister of Economic Development that the debate should be taking place within this chamber and not to any political staff who may be sitting behind me.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, the government's own reports show that \$7.8 billion has been collected from Ontario families and consumers since 2002. The original debt was \$7.8 billion, so enough has been collected to pay off that debt.

Minister, you've collected \$7.8 billion. Where did the money go? How did you waste those funds? Why did you tell Ontario families one thing and do the opposite with the money they're paying through their hydro bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Not only did they not use the money they took off of every Ontarian's bill to pay the debt for four years, they added to the stranded debt. And it wasn't because they were adding supply. We lost almost 1,800 megawatts of power on his watch. That's the equivalent of Niagara Falls going dry. We had to have diesel-fired generators in downtown Toronto. Why? Because they failed to level and be straight up with Ontarians about the mess they had created. Not only did they put that charge on people's bills, they raised the price of electricity 30% in six weeks with their failed deregulation scheme.

We're paying down the debt. We're building new systems. We're building—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I think you know you're playing a little fast and loose with the facts here. There has been some—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's fine. I withdraw. The minister's statements are not quite in keeping with the facts.

Minister, the residual stranded debt was \$7.8 billion. To date, \$7.8 billion has been collected through that charge on the bills of Ontarian families, \$7 billion of which came under the McGuinty government.

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I'll ask the minister: Where did the money go? You've collected \$7.8 billion. That's the amount the debt was. That's what has been collected. Where are you hiding the money? Where did you put it? Why do families keep paying more and more, and you won't even say how much is left to pay off when they should have paid off the \$7.8 billion by now? What did you do with all that money?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We do have to pay interest, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That took maybe all of five seconds to ask the members to come to order. I sat down and you started to interject. I think we all want to recognize the importance of question period, and it is important for members—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's also important that the member from Renfrew, when the Speaker is speaking, should be listening as well.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every year we have paid down the debt, which is very different from what happened when he was there. They may think the billions of dollars we have paid off is horse feathers; we think it's an important initiative to ensure that this debt retirement comes off in a timely fashion.

That debt retirement charge, the stranded debt from the old Ontario Hydro, that charge they put on people's bills for the first four years it was in place while they were government—not one nickel went to the debt retirement charge.

This has been reported every year. The money is going to that debt. The system will be stronger when that debt is paid off and when we make it cleaner and more affordable.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. People struggling with tough times are looking to their government for a break. Instead, they see a government that simply won't help. The government has found money for everything from a consultant's vacation to Japan to corporate tax cuts that cost our treasury billions. Will the government re-evaluate their priorities on Thursday, or can we expect just more of the same?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward to presenting the fall economic statement in this House, as my honourable colleague well knows. I'll leave the details,

of course, to the finance minister to present at that time, but I can say that it will build upon our continuing efforts to support our public services, to invest in jobs and the economy.

I want to remind my honourable colleague of what we've in fact been doing for Ontario families. We are cutting taxes for people to the tune of \$12 billion over three years. The average personal income tax cut this year is \$200 every year. Ninety thousand Ontarians are no longer paying any income taxes. My colleague knows as well that we put in place an energy and property tax credit. It's up to \$900 for families and up to \$1,025 for seniors. All told, it will help nearly three million Ontarians when it comes to their electricity and property taxes. That's the kind of direction we will continue to pursue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's what families in Ontario are experiencing: closed emergency rooms, skyrocketing hydro bills and a Premier who responds to their challenges with simply a shrug while public money flows to well-connected insiders and huge corporate tax giveaways.

We know this government is scrambling. Will they finally re-evaluate their priorities Thursday, or can we expect corporate tax cuts to keep trumping families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that one of the most important things that families count on is a job. I had the privilege and great pleasure just a little over a week ago to visit Hamilton. I was at an event attended by both the incoming and outgoing mayors of Hamilton and a number of other people there representing the community. We were there together to celebrate a new initiative. JNE Consulting has announced a venture together with a Chinese company: 300 new jobs in the green energy sector.

There was a time when the NDP supported clean, green energy, when they supported clean, green jobs, when they supported shutting down dirty coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. That time does not appear to be now. We have not changed; we will continue to find ways to invest in clean energy and to create jobs at the same time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Despite the Premier's empty promises, the government's HST and corporate tax cuts are not creating scads of jobs, but they are making life harder for everyday Ontario families. This Thursday, the government can actually make a difference. They can make a choice that makes a difference for the people of Ontario. Will they make relief for families a priority finally, or will they continue with their flawed tax schemes that leave people paying more and more?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague of some of the things we've done to support families, which she has failed to support: There's our Ontario child benefit, the first benefit of its kind in the country. It is \$1,100 per child. We're proud of that, and we'd love to have the member's support in con-

nection with that. There's a new children's fitness tax credit: \$50 per child. It's not the end of the world—we recognize that—but from a family's perspective, if you have a couple of kids, it's \$100 a year, and believe me, that's nothing to sneeze at. We've also invested in our sales tax credit. It's \$260 for every Ontarian who qualifies. It's going to benefit 2.9 million Ontarians. For a family of four, that's over \$1,000 every single year.

Those are real, they're concrete, they're practical and they're meaningful to families. Our fall economic statement will continue to pursue that kind of direction, and in that, we would be very honoured, of course, to have the support of the member opposite.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Over the fall session, New Democrats have been bringing the challenges facing everyday families right here into the Legislature—their worries about jobs, health care and the growing cost of living—and every day, the Premier has responded with condescending indifference. But now the government's back is to the wall. Will the Premier give people a break and take the HST off the hydro bills on Thursday?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The leader of the third party continues to get up in her place and oppose the important investments that we're making in our energy system.

I want to go back to where the Premier was, because it was just last week that the Premier attended, with our member from Hamilton Mountain, an event where 300 jobs were announced in Hamilton. JNE Consulting and Dago Group are forming a joint venture that will create 300 jobs for a solar panel assembly plant.

The question I think the people of Hamilton need to know, the question the Hamilton Spectator should be asking, the question I think Ontarians need to know, is: Does the leader of the third party support the important investments we're making in our energy system that are creating those 300 clean energy jobs, or will she go back to her riding and tell her constituents she does not support those jobs?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thursday's priority should be making life more affordable for families, period. That should be the priority. Families have seen their bills go up, up, up, and the Premier responds with a shrug. The government has found money for corporate tax cuts, for vacations to Japan, and today we learned that you can even charge the public for a rollercoaster ride in this province. Will the Premier finally provide some help for families and take the HST off electricity bills?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As the Premier said earlier, we've brought forward an energy and property tax credit. Two thirds of Ontario's seniors are going to benefit from that. That's going to provide relief to those seniors when it comes to rising energy costs. It also provides relief to middle-income Ontarians. We recognize that Ontarians

are going through tough times. We recognize that we've just gone through one of the toughest recessions certainly in our time and perhaps since the Great Depression, and we're working with Ontario families to help them get through those tough times.

What we will not do is what the NDP want us to do. They want us to back away from creating jobs in this province. They want us to stop investing in our green energy system; stop building that clean energy economy; kiss away those 300 jobs that the people of Hamilton are going to be getting, that we announced just last week; kiss away the 50,000 jobs we're creating across this province. We will continue to invest in building a clean, strong—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

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Ms. Andrea Horwath: It really is the theatre of the absurd some days.

Lisa Blois from London writes, "My hydro bills have been upwards of \$400 the last few months and we are having a heck of a time keeping up with this bill and trying to pay it off each month. This is absolutely insane and NOT FAIR." The Premier's response to people like Lisa has been a shrug. He can't help, he says. But voices like Lisa's have grown too loud for the government to simply continue to ignore them. Will the Premier give people a break and take the HST off their hydro bills on Thursday?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'll tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to back away from the important investments we're making in energy, the important investments we're making to create clean energy jobs and build a green energy hub.

I have a quote for you here that I'd like to read. This came from that announcement last week in the member's community of Hamilton. The quote is: "The international collaboration between Hamilton's JNE Consulting and Dago Group Ltd. in China is a great example of Ontario's strength as a global leader in green energy. This announcement means good jobs for Hamiltonians and a clean environment for Ontario families."

That quote comes from our Minister of Revenue, the MPP from Hamilton Mountain, who gets it when it comes to standing up for Ontarians and creating jobs across this province and standing up for Hamiltonians who needs those jobs. The leader of the third party should show similar courage and stand up for Hamiltonians, stand up for jobs in Ontario and stand up for the things the NDP used to believe in.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question this time is to the Premier. Premier, you just heard your finance minister say that the reason that you've not paid down the residual stranded debt is because of interest. I'm not sure exactly what kind of rates the minister is signed on to, but Premier, you've collected \$7.8 billion to date. That was

the original residual stranded debt. Could the Premier inform us exactly how much you have paid back in debt interest and then how much you paid down in the principal, or else where exactly all that money did go?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will give the member a little lesson on the structure that he and his government set up. They created the OEFC, the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. A whole bunch of revenues go into that, the debt retirement charge and other things, and things come out, including the debt retirement payments.

Let me just share with him what happened between April 1, 1999, and when they left office. The unfunded liability under that member and his government rose from \$19.4 billion to \$20.5 billion, an increase of over \$1 billion. We have continuously paid it down since taking office. It has declined from \$20.5 billion in 2004 to \$14.8 billion this year. That's a record of achievement. That is the fact. You set this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I know the minister is trying to confuse the issues between residual stranded debt and other debt that he has put on there. But here are the facts that you well know, Premier. To date, the government has collected \$7.8 billion through the debt retirement charge, \$7 billion of which was under your watch. On top of that, you've slapped down the HST. So with 13% on top of that coming out of people's hydro bills, if you collect \$1 billion, it's a further \$130 million.

I think you do understand this. Ontario families are struggling with their hydro bills. A typical family can be paying up to \$100 or more in debt retirement charges on their hydro bills. Bills are unaffordable to Ontario families. Premier, why won't you come clean and tell us exactly how much you've paid off in debt interest and exactly when this charge will be gone, because you've collected \$7.8 billion to date from Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the people of Ontario, again, when Mr. Hudak, the Leader of the Opposition, and his party were in power, the unfunded liability—that's the debt associated with Ontario Hydro—increased from \$19.4 billion to \$20.5 billion, even though on every bill they slapped a debt retirement charge. They didn't use the money for that. On our watch, according to the audited financial statements of the province, that debt has gone from \$20.5 billion to \$14.8 billion and will be eliminated, because we're doing the right thing. We're not messing around with people's bills and fooling around with the numbers to paint a story that, frankly, isn't accurate.

COURT BACKLOG

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Attorney General: Tzvi Erez bilks his Toronto victims out of \$27 million and the crown attorney withdraws the criminal charges because it

doesn't have the resources to prosecute. How does the Attorney General explain that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: That's an important question. We take allegations of fraud very seriously. We prosecute the allegations. We do not walk away from cases. We have resources for the cases that need them, and where more are required, we find them. I take a number of the reports that I've heard and read in the media very seriously. They cause me a great deal of concern. I have asked the chief prosecutor to get to the bottom of it and I've asked for the report as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Assistant Crown Attorney Donna Gillespie is reported to have said that the charges were dropped because the courts were tied up with more serious criminal matters. Seventy people lose \$27 million—for most of them, this is their life savings—in Erez's Ponzi scheme. The Attorney General withdraws those criminal charges, refusing to prosecute. Is Ontario now open for business when it comes to high-end, sophisticated fraud artists?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: All Ontarians take allegations of fraud very seriously. All Ontarians expect, where the evidence supports it, that allegations will be prosecuted. This government takes these allegations very seriously, as I told my friend. As I told my friend opposite, a number of the reports cause me a great deal of concern. I have asked the chief prosecutor to get to the bottom of it and provide me with a report as quickly as possible.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Ontario's Green Energy Act is over a year old now, and over the course of this last year we've heard over and over again about the Green Energy Act's projected job numbers and investments. The ambitious goals of the Green Energy Act—50,000 jobs, billions of dollars in private sector investment and countless megawatts of clean energy—have already begun to show.

I'm proud to say that in my riding of Guelph we've been blessed with some new solar power manufacturers, but Ontarians want to know what this legislation means for them. Could the minister update the House on the government's progress towards creating a clean energy economy in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member from Guelph for her question. Like so many members on this side of the House, she has been a tireless advocate for clean energy in her riding. I want to thank her for that, because it's important.

The fact is, the Green Energy Act is making Ontario a world leader in the clean energy industry. In recent months we've attracted over \$1 billion in private sector investment and created more than 1,400 construction jobs. We've made outstanding strides in the solar power sector alone. Ontario is Canada's leader in solar capacity and home to the largest solar farm in the world. The

Sarnia Solar Project, with 80 megawatts now online, represents approximately \$400 million of investment and enough electricity each year to power more than 12,000 homes. Construction of the project created about 800 jobs.

Last month, the Premier visited the Melitron Corp. in Guelph, where solar panel parts will be manufactured, creating up to 60 direct and 300 indirect jobs. We're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: These numbers are significant. Investments and jobs in clean energy manufacturing will go a long way to rebuilding both local economies and the economy of our province as a whole.

Interjections.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: The members opposite may be laughing, but my constituents in Guelph are very happy to see that our manufacturing sector, which was traditionally focused on auto parts, is diversifying into clean energy.

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I know that green energy is about more than just figures and facts or dollars; it's about making life better for the citizens of our province. Could the minister explain what Ontarians can expect to see as a result of these clean energy investments? How will they affect the everyday lives of our citizens and their communities?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's no question about it: Investments in clean energy manufacturing and jobs will have a good rate of return for all Ontarians. But I'm not just talking about financial returns; I'm talking about quality of life here in the province.

As I said earlier, the member from Guelph has been a strong voice for clean energy in her riding and making life better for her constituents, and her hard work is clearly evident.

Just last summer, I had the pleasure of joining the member to launch a solar module manufacturing facility that will create up to 500 jobs in the Guelph area. This Canadian Solar Inc. plant perfectly illustrates how the government's Green Energy Act is positively impacting the lives of Ontarians. In every corner of the province, solar energy products and manufacturing plants are opening, creating jobs and bringing investment to Ontario.

Across the province, we're creating clean energy jobs that are putting our highly skilled workforce to use, jobs in construction, installation, operations and maintenance, engineering, manufacturing, finance—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier McGuinty's failed wage restraint experiment is going to lead to more McGuinty Liberal health care cuts as hospitals look for ways to fund the pay increases that arbitrators are awarding. McGuinty Liberal health care cuts have already closed emergency rooms in

Fort Erie and Port Colborne and forced the Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga to use a garage as an ER. Only in Premier McGuinty's Ontario can patients have their blood pressure and their tire pressure checked at the same time.

To the Premier: Have you visited the McGuinty wing of the hospital to see it for yourself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Since the budget policy was announced, there have been some 40 collective agreements achieved in Ontario. Four of those were subject to arbitrators' decisions, and the balance, 36—more than half—achieved zero and zero. The average public sector settlement is down to 1.7%. It's below the private sector, and it's certainly below the settlement the federal government gave their employees, which was quite high relative to what we've done.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker: We reject their ideas about labour unrest, about fights, about all of that. We rejected what they did with the social contract. This is harder, it takes longer, but we are seeing results. We will continue to work with the bargaining agents in hospitals and universities and across the broader public sector as we move back to a balanced budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Only after we asked about the conditions at the Credit Valley Hospital did the McGuinty Liberals hastily assemble a funding announcement, yet not a nickel was dedicated to the emergency room.

After seven years, Premier McGuinty has changed. He used to hold himself out as the defender of public health care. Now, McGuinty Liberal health care cuts have put the emergency room in Wallaceburg on the chopping block, and the Minister of Health is sitting on the rural and northern health care plan to cut more emergency rooms if the McGuinty Liberals are re-elected.

Now you use a garage as an emergency room. Is the garage equipped with defibrillator pads, or will mechanics be trained to use battery cables on patients in a pinch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise in this House and tell the people opposite that their antics around Credit Valley Hospital are nothing short of disgusting. It is shameful what these people have done.

I did take the opportunity to visit Credit Valley Hospital last week after I heard allegations of patients being kept in dirty garages. That is a complete misrepresentation. It is completely unacceptable, derogatory and insulting to the health care professionals who work at Credit Valley Hospital. I did go to Credit Valley Hospital, I did speak to the emergency department professionals, and I did assure myself that patients—that quality never suffered.

The Credit Valley Hospital does have surgeons. We are building a new addition. We have expanded bed

capacity, but to suggest that patient care was compromised is completely—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. This year, over 400,000 Ontarians were forced to turn to food banks for help. That's a 28% increase since 2008, when the Premier launched his so-called poverty reduction strategy. The government won't release its own poverty indicators until after the 2011 election, but new numbers from the Ontario Association of Food Banks show that more families struggle to put food on the table. Will the government admit that its poverty reduction strategy has been a total, abject failure?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to be a member of a government that takes poverty seriously. No other government before us had the courage to set a goal to reduce poverty 25% over—

Interjection: By 25 in 5.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: By 25 in 5. So I'm very pleased.

First of all, let me thank Food Banks Canada for this report; it's very important. I want to thank all of those who are working with the food banks.

This government has done a lot since we came to power. First of all, we have increased the minimum wage, which you know was not increased for many years.

Interjection: Almost nine years.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Nine years. We are also delivering close to 35,000 rent supplements to help those in need. We have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: When this government talks about a 25% reduction in poverty, we do not expect a 28% increase in food bank use.

The McGuinty government refuses to take responsibility for the hunger that plagues more and more Ontarians. Instead, it blames things like the recession or has no answer at all. But food bank use is rising, even with the modest economic recovery and in spite of the fact of your 2008 promise. The Ontario Association of Food Banks knows that precarious work, lack of employee benefits, rising hydro prices and inadequate social assistance and retirement incomes mean that rising numbers of Ontarians are turning to food banks. My question: When will the McGuinty government stop letting hunger plague 400,000 Ontarians and do something concrete to reduce it?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I'm going to let the member opposite know what we have done. We have accelerated the phase-in of OCB by two years, providing \$1,100 annually per child. We have committed to investing \$200 million in 2010, increasing to \$300 million in

2011, to fund full-day learning, which also helps to reduce poverty in Ontario.

We know we have a lot to do. We have increased social assistance by 12% and will be announcing the review of social assistance, which is long overdue. But I take exception when a party that increased social assistance by 165% when they were in power is trying to give us lessons today. I'm not taking your advice. We will continue to work to reduce poverty in Ontario.

DIABETES

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion and Sport. This week we marked World Diabetes Day, and I'm curious to know how the government is working to keep Ontarians informed about diabetes prevention. Specifically, what is the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport doing to inform Ontarians about ways to prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for the question.

I am certainly pleased to rise in this Legislature to acknowledge World Diabetes Day and to speak to some of our government's initiatives to prevent type 2 diabetes in the province. The government, through the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, is investing in community-based initiatives and workplace programs to increase awareness of diabetes risk factors. We are providing education and skill development through prevention initiatives and community partnerships. We have targeted high-risk communities, including low-income families and people of aboriginal, Asian, South Asian, Hispanic and African-Caribbean descent. Many of these programs have been facilitated through cultural roundtables and aboriginal health access centres.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: We have developed and implemented prevention initiatives in 19 neighbourhoods in Toronto, Peel and northwestern Ontario. We have established 132 community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: We all know that diabetes has become a major health concern for Ontarians throughout the province. Diabetes affects not only adults but our children as well. We understand that the cost of treating diabetes can be significant, and it's important that we move forward to ensure that families across Ontario have the knowledge and understanding, along with the proper supports in place, to help not only treat but prevent the onset of diabetes.

Our diabetes strategy has gone a long way to ensure that the prevention and treatment of diabetes remains constant, but we can always do more. Could the minister please tell this House what the government is doing to help prevent the onset of diabetes in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very concerned. Far too many Ontarians are developing diabetes. That's why we're working hard to prevent or delay the progression of the disease and to ensure that all Ontarians with diabetes get access to the best possible care.

We became the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children and youth with type 1 diabetes. We've expanded the program to include adults with type 1 diabetes.

We're investing \$741 million into our diabetes strategy. It's a comprehensive approach that includes public education, expanded services, a diabetes care registry, the expansion of bariatric surgery and much, much more.

Ellen Malcolmson, the president and CEO of the Canadian Diabetes Association, says, "Providing Ontarians with type 1 diabetes the tools they require to effectively manage their disease is a great step forward."

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: Two weeks ago, I asked the minister to order a comprehensive review of the motor vehicle inspection program. That request was made because of an increasing number of reports of safety certificates being issued on what were subsequently found to be unsafe vehicles. The minister declined to do so.

Now we have evidence that safety certificates are being issued for vehicles that have been recalled under a manufacturer's open recall, even though the repairs under that recall have not been made. Given the serious safety implications, why is the Ministry of Transportation allowing this practice to continue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the member opposite again raising this issue. Certainly when he raised it initially, I made inquiries with the ministry and established that the system that is in place was put in place many years ago, before 2003, that there are fines and there are protocols in place to deal with any problems that arise. We have also put in place a call centre so that consumers could contact us. We're making sure the mechanics have the credentials they need. If there's a specific case that he has unearthed that he would like me to look into, I will certainly take that under consideration. He can let me know about the specifics of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I brought the specific case to the minister's attention. She seemed to have ignored it. What I'm referring to today is that thousands of vehicles are being sold every day under ministry-approved safety certificates, even though repairs have not been made. This is a wide-reaching issue.

Ministry licence inspection facilities make no effort to determine whether a vehicle has been under a recall or whether the prescribed recall repairs have been made. The ministry has access to all recall notices, but there's no requirement on inspection facilities to actually determine whether a car is under recall.

Will the minister agree to take the necessary steps to ensure that inspection facilities make compliance with

recall notices a mandatory condition of issuing safety certificates? Will she put that policy in place in her ministry?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, as I say, we are regularly investigating garages that we suspect aren't following the rules. We investigate mechanics registered at multiple inspection stations. We monitor the practices at garages around the province. We will continue to do that. If there is a specific issue around recall, I will investigate that and I will talk with ministry officials.

This regime was put in place when the previous government was in office. We have improved on that regime. We continue to improve on the regime. If there is a specific issue—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The members opposite talk about the length of time the regime has been in place. The protocols were put in place by their members. We have improved upon those protocols, we will continue to improve upon the protocols, and on this particular issue of recall, I will investigate with the ministry. I appreciate the member raising it.

AGENCY SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Today we learned that a Niagara Parks Commission executive racked up \$400,000 in expenses on everything from \$10,000 hotel stays in England to a \$1,800 nightclub tab, to a \$200 trip to the liquor store. The executive even charged a pound of Starbucks coffee to the commission and claimed it as a meal. Does the Premier think that expensing Starbucks coffee and a pricey night out is acceptable?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: I appreciate the opportunity to talk about tourism and also the Niagara Parks Commission in our great province. I am aware of the matter. This government is committed to protecting taxpayers' money and increasing agency accountability for the people of Ontario. This is why we have brought in new expense rules across the government in all agencies to bring in greater accountability and transparency. These new rules came in the fall of 2009, after the expenses were incurred. These types of expenses are no longer acceptable.

We have appointed a new chair, Fay Booker, to the Niagara Parks Commission. She has invaluable experience in governance, accounting and auditing. We are moving ahead with the Niagara Parks Commission.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families were literally taken for a ride when an executive expensed a roller-coaster ride in Las Vegas. When people hear stories of backroom, sole-source deals and lavish executive spending on nightclubs and roller coasters at the Niagara Parks Commission, they quickly lose faith. Why should we believe this government's claim that they are restoring accountability at the Niagara Parks Commission when

day in and day out there is more evidence that they are not?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Our government, one more time, is committed to protecting taxpayers' money and increasing agencies' accountability to the people of Ontario.

In September 2009, the Premier directed all government agencies, boards and commissions to strictly adhere to the rules in the public service travel, meal and hospitality expenses directive. The expenses incurred were prior to September 2009. These expenses are no longer acceptable. Chair Fay Booker has made significant changes to the corporate culture at the Niagara Parks Commission. I have full confidence in the chair, and we are looking forward to moving the Niagara Parks Commission forward.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL WINTER FAIR

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, this past weekend marked the closing of another year of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. It's a signature event for Toronto, and like everyone who lives in Toronto, I'm thrilled to see it. It gives the urbanites here an opportunity to know and understand rural communities. Of course, it's a wonderful opportunity for the children, because they get to actually understand where their food comes from and they get to see animals upfront.

I'd like to know, Minister, if you could share a little bit about what's happened this year at the royal agricultural fair?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: Thank you very much for the question. At the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, we are very pleased to be the lead ministry at the royal winter fair. I want to share with the Speaker that the Royal is now in its 88th year. It is the world's largest combined indoor celebration of agriculture and equestrianism—the largest in the world.

When the country comes to the city, I can tell you that the Royal celebrated with rodeos and rock music, and I'm very proud of the strong attendance from those in Toronto and the GTA. It's an excellent opportunity to see the great things that are happening in our agricultural sector and rural Ontario. It offers an opportunity to learn about our agri-food industry and to know about the good things that are growing. It provides shoppers with a classic farmers' market—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Each year, there are thousands of attendees and exhibitors that visit the Royal, and I would expect the size of this event would have a very significant impact on the local economy. November is a slow month in Toronto when it comes to having tourism. Over the past few years, as the Royal has experienced a very positive and steady growth in attendance with the

exhibitors and corporate partners, it really does a wonderful job of marketing and promotional efforts for attracting both domestic and international visitors to Toronto.

I imagine the economic impact on the city is very substantial, both by spending through the show itself and, of course, by the visitors. I wondered, Minister, if you could give us some idea and share with us the actual results and the number of attendees at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, and let's talk a little bit about that economic impact on our city.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to say that this year's attendance was over 300,000 people. I think that's remarkable.

I also want to say that for the Royal in 2009—just to give you a sense of the scope—the economic impact was estimated at \$40.5 million for the city of Toronto and \$56.3 million for the province. When we look at the international guests, 4,240 international guests, 65 countries, attended the Royal. And the educational component is always a huge draw; it's a wonderful class trip for our students. More than 500 schools brought 26,000 students to the Royal to visit 18 educational centres. That's incredible.

AGENCY SPENDING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. When the executive director of the Niagara Parks Commission was caught handing out a \$500,000 sweetheart deal, the minister said it met an exemption at Management Board rules. Now, new information has come to light that Ontario families have paid \$400,000 in expenses to that same executive director.

Is the Management Board exempting roller-coaster rides and bags of Starbucks coffee now?

Hon. Michael Chan: As I said, in September 2009, the Premier directed all government agencies, boards and commissions to strictly adhere to the rules in the Ontario public service travel, meals and hospitality expenses directive. The expenses incurred were prior to this. These expenses are no longer acceptable.

Let's look at the root of the problem. This individual was hired by the Conservative government. Chair Fay Booker has made significant changes to the corporate culture at the Niagara Parks Commission. I have true confidence in the chair. We are looking forward to moving the Niagara Parks Commission forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That response by the minister about his agency was disappointing and, frankly, it was disgraceful. The fact of the matter is, he's exempting them from one thing and now he's allowing another thing to occur which has cost Ontario taxpayers almost \$1 million under this executive director's leadership.

Instead of showing accountability, the commission and its executives right now are pointing fingers at one another—hardly confidence for the Ontario people. It's bad enough that these sweetheart deals and expense

scandals keep happening time and again after the Premier promises continually to do better. Now, when we bring forward more scandalous uses of taxpayer dollars—Ontario families have had their confidence eroded in this government—why can't the Ontario Liberal Party give the people of Ontario the change they absolutely need at this time?

Hon. Michael Chan: Pointing fingers is being performed by that honourable member.

Let's look at the facts. We have increased accountability, we have increased transparency, but we must address the root of the problem here. This is an individual that was hired by the Conservative government.

On the other hand, we are committed to moving forward. That's why we have appointed an excellent chair, Fay Booker, who is an expert in corporate governance. Chair Booker has made significant changes to the corporate culture of NPC. I have full confidence in the chair as we move forward to strengthen the Niagara Parks Commission.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Nine hundred workers in the Hamilton area are off the job because US Steel has locked them out. The other day, those workers came to talk to the Premier about what they're facing, and the Premier snuck in and snuck out the back door. If the Premier is so proud of his job record in Hamilton, why is he sneaking past the men and women who want to talk about their job losses and how this government has let them down?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member knows full well that situations like this are always complex, they are never easy, and they are always unfortunate for those workers, for their families, for the community.

I want to commend the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Minister of Finance, and especially the Premier for standing up for those workers, for encouraging and urging the parties to get back to the table. That's the approach that this government has always taken: to be there, to work with the parties, to encourage them to get back to the table, to keep them at the table and to resolve the dispute so they can get the work moving forward. We will continue to do that.

That is the focus of my Ministry of Labour. We have a seasoned mediator at the table working with the parties, trying to work through this very difficult—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, no answer.

Hamilton has been losing thousands of jobs in the last seven years under this government, with an additional 1,200 jobs last month. A vague promise of jobs two years down the road at some point doesn't do anything to help the 900 men and women locked out of their jobs today.

Will this Premier help the workers of US Steel today and really do something by stopping foreign corporations

from bullying them and by making scab labour illegal in this province? Make scab labour illegal in this province if you want to help all the workers of this province.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: We will do anything and everything that we can to bring the parties together, to keep the parties together, to work with them to get a resolution. We are working with all parties that have an interest in protecting those jobs, as well as any other job in Ontario. And I want to again commend the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

It was our party that came to the table with \$150 million to protect the pensions of those workers. It is our party that continues to encourage all those that have an interest in keeping those jobs in Hamilton, in protecting those jobs. Again, we will do everything that we can in our power to protect those jobs.

Through the Ministry of Labour, we have our most seasoned mediator there working with the parties. It's unfortunate that that member is not—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. In my riding of Essex, new councillors and mayors are set to be sworn in as of December 1, and while there is a great appetite to get this new four-year term under way, there have been discussions about the past municipal election, what worked and what didn't.

Some of my constituents have come to me with the idea that voting hours need to be increased and that alternative voting methods like electronic voting should be explored by this government. This is about the Municipal Elections Act and possible changes that could enhance it.

Minister, could you please outline for the House what steps your ministry is taking to strengthen this act and if you're planning on reviewing the municipal elections process?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. It's a very important question.

First of all, I think for every member in the House on both sides, we want to congratulate those newly elected representatives and those who were re-elected. We look forward to working with them.

Following every municipal election, our government reviews the act to ensure it meets the needs of our municipalities and the people in those municipalities. We enter into this review with our partners: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., Elections Ontario and the public. We believe that this review is very important. Our goal is to ensure that every possible voter gets out to the polls to cast his or her choice as to who they feel should represent them. This review, hopefully, will help that.

VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to take the time to introduce the family of one of the pages, Joshua: Denise and Scott Turner, from my riding of Durham. Their son is a page here in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's the second time the Turners have had a page here, as well—proud parents.

DEFERRED VOTES

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1146.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Mitchell, Carol
Murray, Glen R.
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy

Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill

O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 61; the nays are 19.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4, 2010, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question, given by the Minister of Labour, concerning job losses in Hamilton. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ABORIGINAL LAND CLAIMS

Mr. Toby Barrett: One day after Remembrance Day, Christie Blatchford was to deliver a speech at the University of Waterloo on her book, *Helpless: Caledonia's Nightmare of Fear and Anarchy, and How the Law Failed All of Us*.

One day after we paid tribute to those who fought to the death for such rights as freedom of speech, Ms. Blatchford was prevented from speaking. A university spokesperson indicated, "Unfortunately, there is a small minority that felt that they would win if they'd just sit on the stage and yell 'racist, racist, racist.'" "They did win," said Blatchford. "If their whole goal is to shut down free speech, then absolutely, they were successful." An online photo shows protestors carrying a swastika across the stage.

This is not over. The First Nations Solidarity Working Group has issued a call to organize and respond to Blatchford as she makes her way across Canada promoting her book.

Freedom of expression and free speech are important. People have fought to their death for these freedoms. Don't impose censorship on another because you don't agree. Intimidation, in my view, is wrong and cowardly. If you want to get your message out, you need to let others do the same.

Christie Blatchford may return to Waterloo. She's speaking tonight in Hamilton. I trust her right to freedom of expression is enforced.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. Paul Miller: This year alone, it's estimated that there have been at least 1,200 jobs lost in Hamilton.

That's 1,200 in addition to the thousands of jobs lost under McGuinty's seven governing years.

The Premier made an announcement recently about 300 jobs at JNE, but it's not planned until at least 2012, with no guarantee that the jobs will go to the unemployed Hamiltonians.

Three hundred jobs are a mere drop in the Hamilton unemployment bucket. We don't know how many of these jobs are at minimum wage and how many are for skilled labour at the appropriate wage rate or what the government is doing to replace the other 900-plus recent job losses with the new provincial-government-funded job initiatives.

On behalf of Hamilton's unemployed, I call on the Premier and his government to step up to the plate with initiatives to support all of Hamilton's jobless workers now. To show real commitment, this government should support the NDP anti-scab legislation which was tabled this year and seek and encourage Canadian ownership of our base industries rather than leaving our future at the whim of multinational corporations.

ELITE MARTIAL ARTS AND FITNESS CENTRE

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last week, members of the Elite Martial Arts and Fitness Centre from Orléans returned from the WKC world championships in Germany with a total of 10 medals, including three gold. It was the best performance ever by the small Orléans karate school, and the athletes should be commended for their dedication and hard work.

Ottawa-Orléans has a great diversity of martial arts clubs, and the Elite Martial Arts and Fitness Centre is one of the community leaders. These clubs operate with little or no government support and provide their membership with physical fitness and leadership skills and help our communities. I commend the parents and youth who give so much of their time and the dedication of the club leadership.

Of particular note are the accomplishments of Rebecca Shaffer, who won two individual gold medals and was a member of the gold-medal-winning points fighting team.

Renshi Guy Ouellette has done a terrific job mentoring and coaching his young students, and the proof is in the results.

Congratulations and félicitations to all the medal recipients, including Jesse Munro, Danika Plouffe, Damian Moffatt, Brianna Ouellette, Tyler Greer, Serena Moffatt and Marie Pharand.

GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP WEEK

Mrs. Julia Munro: This week, we celebrate a very important event in Ontario: Global Entrepreneurship Week. The aim of this week is simple: to engage youth from around the world to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs, innovators and change makers.

Between November 15 and 21, 2010, events and activities will connect millions of people, including

young adults, students, entrepreneurial experts, policy makers, educators and politicians, with the goal of unleashing ideas, exposing young people to entrepreneurship and becoming agents of change in their communities, cities and countries.

In Canada, Global Entrepreneurship Week is led by the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. This year, they are working to encourage hundreds of grassroots regional and national organizations to champion a culture of entrepreneurship and mentoring through local, national and global initiatives.

The foundation is a fantastic organization that has helped more than 3,700 young entrepreneurs launch businesses that have created more than 17,000 new jobs. They are an inspiring organization that I encourage every member of this House to work with.

I encourage everyone to get involved in entrepreneurship week. You can find more at gewcanada.com.

BAXTROM'S YOUR INDEPENDENT GROCER

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to announce that Baxtrom's Your Independent Grocer, in Cornwall, from my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, was one of the Ontario grocery retailers recognized with a Foodland Ontario Retailer Award recently.

Gold category awards are presented to chain and independent stores in three specific categories: seasonal, creative and cross-merchandised products. Baxtrom's received a gold recognition in the creative products category.

Ontario retailer awards recognize excellence in the promotion of local produce, helping to support a strong agri-food industry and bringing fresh and healthy foods to Ontarians. They are part of the Open Ontario plan to create jobs and build the economy.

Baxtrom's support for the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy, which provides awareness and education to consumers about the vast variety of Ontario produce, helps Ontario farmers and our local communities. I am proud to call Baxtrom's my choice for my grocery needs, and I'm confident I can trust them to guarantee fresh produce and excellent service.

1510

John Baxtrom and his staff at Baxtrom's Your Independent Grocer have been a staple in our community, with their support and commitment to customer service. Today, I congratulate them on their success in marketing fresh Ontario produce.

As well, I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate and thank John Baxtrom and his staff for their outstanding support to community organizations and events. Your generosity is appreciated by the citizens of the riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

EID al-ADHA

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise in the House today to acknowledge the significance of Eid al-Adha, the

Festival of Sacrifice, which Muslim families across the great province of Ontario are celebrating today. Eid al-Adha, or the Greater Eid, is an annual festival to remember the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael as an act of obedience to God.

Today, Muslim families across Ontario will commemorate Abraham's willingness to make this sacrifice by making a concerted effort to distribute food to those individuals less fortunate than themselves, thus allowing all the opportunity to partake in the traditional sacrificial meal.

Today also marks the 25th annual Eid festival taking place at Exhibition Place. Some 15,000 Muslims from all over Ontario are gathered there for the Eid al-Adha celebrations. The celebrations will provide all Ontarians with the opportunity to recognize the contributions individuals from the Muslim community have made to this great province, and are a further reminder of the tremendous cultural diversity across Ontario.

All Ontarians value the message conveyed by Eid al-Adha: that we should look out for those less fortunate than ourselves and do all we can to ensure that no one is left behind.

On behalf of the entire PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I extend my best wishes to Ontario's Muslim community as they gather to commemorate Eid al-Adha and spend time with family and friends. Eid Mubarak.

HAWKESBURY AND DISTRICT GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Last Friday, I was delighted to attend the official launch of the new cancer care clinic at the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital, in my riding. The state-of-the-art clinic is the product of a partnership between the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital and the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre.

Cancer patients in our region will now have access to specialized treatment, including chemotherapy, much closer to home. As a satellite program, the cancer care clinic will benefit from the expertise and innovation of the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre.

By offering new outpatient programs in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital is meeting the direction of our government: excellent care for all.

I would like to thank Minister Bob Chiarelli for participating in this landmark event. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Marc LeBoutillier, CEO of the Hawkesbury and District General Hospital; Dr. Jack Kitts, CEO of the Ottawa Hospital; and all of the dedicated hospital staff.

NURSE-PRACTITIONER-LED CLINIC

Mr. Bill Mauro: Recently, I had the pleasure of helping to announce a nurse-practitioner-led clinic in the former McKellar hospital. This clinic will eventually be

home to 3,200 patients who currently do not have access to primary care, or orphaned patients.

It was a pleasure to work with Lynne Thibeault, Dona Ree, Sandra Crawford and Julie Campbell, who helped bring this clinic to reality. Additional partners on this team are Crystal Kaukinen, Karen-Lue Kim, Michele Grace, Lindsay Lunny, Claudia Isfeld, Mandy Bruyere, Courtney Kelly and Tina Diner.

This is the fourth of 25 NP-led clinics that our government has committed to opening, and this new clinic is electronic-medical-record-ready.

When our government came to office in 2003, there were 1.3 million unattached patients in Ontario, and today, according to the Ontario Medical Association, that number has been reduced to 300,000 to 400,000. There's still more work to be done, but this is incredible progress.

The number of unattached, orphaned patients in Thunder Bay is down as well. With the recently approved academic family health team for Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, we can look forward to even further reductions in the number of unattached, orphaned patients.

The new NP-led clinic is also the second great announcement at McKellar in the last few weeks, following on the heels of a \$2-million announcement by our government that will help to create 100 retirement suites in the same building.

By renovating and reinvigorating McKellar, we're helping patient outcomes, we're ensuring more people have access to primary care and we're reducing pressures on the ER.

These initiatives are examples of how the people of Thunder Bay are working with our government, building on past achievements, to dramatically improve the quality of health care in the northwest.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: Western Mississauga and 905 families are particularly pleased with Ontario's recent move to help promote children's fitness and recreational activities. Children benefit immensely from a diversity of experiences and opportunities, and that's why we believe it's important for young people to be involved in sports and other instructional or organized activities where they can enjoy themselves and lead healthier, more active lives in the process.

Ontario has introduced the children's activity tax credit to help make it a little easier for parents to get their children involved in these activities and to put more money back in the pockets of Ontario families. This permanent, refundable tax credit will benefit almost two million children in our province and allow parents who enrol their children in recreational activities to claim up to \$500 per child. The average family will save about \$100 a year. And, proportionally, those who stand to benefit the most are Ontario's low- and middle-income families.

By promoting a healthy mind and an active lifestyle for today's youth, Ontario is supporting a better future for all Ontarians.

I would also like to wish Eid al-Adha Mubarak to our brothers and sisters, particularly at the Al-Farooq mosque, whom I visited this morning, and at the Islamic Society of North America.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TEMISKAMING AND CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 CONCERNANT TEMISKAMING ET CHATHAM-KENT-LEAMINGTON

Mr. Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to change the name of the territorial district of Timiskaming and the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex / Projet de loi 132, Loi remplaçant le nom du district territorial de Timiskaming et de la circonscription électorale de Chatham-Kent-Essex.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: The bill amends Ontario regulation 180/03, the division of Ontario into geographic areas made under the Territorial Division Act, 2002, to change the name of Timiskaming to Temiskaming. The bill also changes all statutory references to Timiskaming to Temiskaming. The bill also amends the Representation Act, 2005, to change the name of the electoral district of Chatham-Kent-Essex to Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

WIRELESS PHONE, SMART PHONE AND DATA SERVICE TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES SERVICES DE TÉLÉPHONE MOBILE, DE TÉLÉPHONE INTELLIGENT ET DE DONNÉES

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to provide transparency and protection for consumers of wireless telephone services, smart phone services and data services in Ontario / Projet de loi 133, Loi prévoyant la transparence des services de téléphone mobile, de téléphone intelligent et de données et la protection des consommateurs de tels services en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. David Oraziotti: I do. I appreciate your indulgence. I'll read the explanatory note to make it clear for members.

1520

The bill applies to service agreements in respect of wireless telephone, smart phone and data services. The key features of the bill include the following:

An agreement for wireless telephone service or data service must be expressed in plain language;

An agreement must contain certain information with respect to descriptions of services and goods to be provided under the agreement;

A supplier must agree to remove any technological or physical feature that restricts the functioning of the goods to a particular service provider when the consumer pays full price for the goods or when the agreement expires;

A supplier must agree to notify a consumer when the consumer has reached 90% of their limit of any particular service under the agreement, as well as when the consumer is about to incur additional charges for using the service outside the geographical limits;

No agreement may be amended or renewed without the express consent of the consumer; and

The consumer may at any time, without reason, cancel the agreement on giving 30 days' notice, as well as the limitation of cancellation fees.

Rules are established with respect to advertising prices for wireless telephone, smart phone and data services. Prepaid cards for a fixed amount of service may not be sold if they have an expiry date. The enforcement of the provisions would be included in the Consumer Protection Act.

This is an issue that Ontarians want addressed. It's a pocketbook issue, and the bill has to do with reducing fees to consumers.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Peter Shurman: I have numerous petitions here from people in Thornhill sent to me, very courteously, by my constituent Lynn Perrier. She has also kindly included petitions that the members for Willowdale, York South-Weston, Oak Ridges-Markham, Markham-Unionville, Richmond Hill and Vaughan apparently would not read into the record, but I will.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Breana.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Dave Levac: This is in respect of the workers at ECP, who have been on strike for over two and a half years.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

MUNICIPAL PLANNING

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty government has effectively neutered municipal authority and local decision-making through legislation and policies such as the provincial policy statement, 2005, and the Green Energy and Green Economy Act; and

"Whereas it is an affront to democracy to remove local input and authority from the decision-making process on matters that directly affect municipalities and property owners;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government change the necessary legislation and regulations to restore municipal planning authority on matters affecting their communities and property owners."

I agree with this petition. I'll sign my name and pass it over to page William.

GLENGARRY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition here that came from Len Siwik of the Hôpital Glengarry Memorial Hospital of Alexandria.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is promoting physical fitness for its citizens;

"Whereas adults have been participating in the physical fitness programs at the pool located at Glengarry Memorial Hospital for many years;

"Whereas regulations require the instructor to be a qualified fitness instructor and also requires the instructor to have completed the national Lifesaving Society course;

"Whereas the pool is small (maximum allowed, 30) and adult fitness classes are limited to 15;

"Whereas the pool is shallow: five feet, six inches at the deep end and three feet, two inches at the shallow end;

"Whereas the pool bottom is flat, at three different levels, and the adults exercising are standing with feet on the bottom;

"Whereas the pool is directly attached to Glengarry Memorial Hospital, and is fully equipped with life-saving equipment and emergency phone;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exempt qualified fitness instructors, for adult fitness classes, at Glengarry Memorial Hospital from the requirement of having completed the national Lifesaving Society course. This will ensure that adult fitness classes will continue into the future at Glengarry Memorial Hospital."

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I have signed this and will give it to William from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition certified by the Clerk, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I have affixed my signature.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

1530

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees ... which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I am in agreement and am giving this to page Joshua.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm also delighted that Jake Fell from the riding of Peterborough is a new page here.

This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To continue with their support of the guns and gangs program" utilized by our police forces in Ontario;

"To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

"To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

"To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

"To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be."

I agree with this, will affix my signature to it and give it to my friend.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. John O'Toole: I've waited long and patiently to read this petition on behalf of my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies"—we read about that in the paper today—"which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now."

"By signing this petition, you are authorizing the coalition of CACDS, OPA and IPO to use the personal information you have provided to us, particularly your name and email address, to send you additional information and updates about the Ontario government's proposed amendments to pharmacy and drug reform. If you do not wish to receive these emails, please put an 'X' besides the following.

I'm pleased to submit this.

CEMETERIES

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I here sign my name and I will give it to page Joshua.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have petitions from all over the riding of Leeds–Grenville, which read as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition" the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services."

I agree with the petition and I will give it to William for the table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to read in this petition on behalf of my riding of Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. It has been read in a couple of times this afternoon.

"Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

"Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

"Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister ... refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen's Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

"That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services

to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 15, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'll in effect be doing the lead for the NDP. However, it's not going to be a full one-hour lead because our critic is going to be speaking after the official opposition speaks to it.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, we're not deferring the lead; I said I'm doing the lead, but I'm not going to be using the full hour. I'm just trying to make it clear to people so they understand. I don't want to confuse people.

We're going to vote for the legislation. I've looked at it carefully, as have other members of the caucus. I suppose the only good thing you can say is it beats a kick in the head. It's a pretty modest proposal, pretty thin gruel for families that are hurting real hard across Ontario. What it does is provide a \$50 tax credit to families for each of their children who is enrolled in a specified program, but the \$50, as I understand it—and correct me if I'm wrong, Speaker; please say so—requires the family to pay out \$500. So they effectively get a tax credit of a maximum of 10% up to \$500 for enrolling their children in enumerated programs.

I don't know about where you live, but where I come from, families are hurting. You've got families—it's not untypical for a young family to have two, three, four kids. You've got families that, if they're going to collect the maximum tax credit, have got to invest, with two, three, four kids, \$2,000, let's say, over the course of a summer, in a particular program to get a \$200 tax credit. And you see, that \$200 tax credit doesn't go anywhere near the investment for the next year's program, whether it's, I suppose, piano lessons, dramatic arts, dance, the visual arts or language instruction. Come on: How many real families in the real Ontario—and I'm not talking

about the intersection of Yonge and Bloor; I'm talking about the real Ontario.

1540

I'll tell you what: We've got people taking language instruction down where I live. They take it at the Croatian National Home on the weekend, or the Italian hall or the Slovak community. They don't pay for the language instruction. That's not how it happens down where I come from. These people belong to mutual benefit organizations, and one of the provisions of that mutual benefit organization is a language school. Inevitably, to the chagrin of the kids who are involved, although they usually learn to like it, there is a dance school as well. Some of them, by the time they're teenagers, remain involved; many move on.

“Structured interaction among children where supervisors teach or help children develop interpersonal skills.” I think I know what that means, but again, down where I come from there aren't a whole lot of families, especially families in hard times, that can afford to pay \$500 a child or more. You see, the program may cost more than \$500, but in any event, the credit is based only on a maximum of \$500: to wit, \$50. If you spend less than \$500, it's less than \$50.

The HST alone hammers families far beyond whatever relief this modest tax credit might provide. If you take your kid to hockey, you're talking about some major investments in equipment and some major investments in travel, and I'm not sure that this program even covers equipment. It covers paying for participation in the activity. Soccer is a relatively inexpensive sport to engage in. It's pretty common, pretty popular down where I come from in Niagara region. A lot of young people are involved in it. I suppose and I would hope that joining the Y would be covered, but I'm not sure that that's covered specifically in any of the enumerated qualifying activities.

At the end of the day, it's going to be very, very confusing. At the end of the day, there are going to be a relatively modest number of families that avail themselves of this tax credit, and the tax credit is going to do little to relieve the pressure that's on families increasingly. Don't forget, down where I come from, John Deere, a 100-year-old factory, 900 employees—gone like that. The last man standing just left around a month ago; literally, the last man standing just left around a month ago. These families don't have any disposable income to enrol their kids in the programs that are contemplated by this particular legislation. Those kids are out delivering newspapers to raise the modest amounts of money that in better times their parents, their folks, would have given them by way of allowances.

When you talk about a region like Niagara that has been effectively deindustrialized—and understand what deindustrialization means in so many respects. It doesn't just mean the job losses; it means the loss of industrial assessment, and yet the cost of firefighting, the cost of delivering water, the cost of sewers and the cost of policing don't change one iota. That new burden is

passed on to property taxpayers. So you have this incredible contradiction of taxpayers who just lost their jobs, like workers at John Deere, who then face increasing property taxes and then are confronted by an HST on goods and services where that tax was never applied before; it is a brand new tax by Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government. Then they suffer and endure skyrocketing electricity rates, because these not-so-smart meters, these stupid meters, have done dramatic things to people's electricity rates.

It's not that these folks don't conserve; they do. I live in a community and represent communities where kids learn from a very early age that you turn the lights off when you leave a room. We knew about that years ago. I live in a community and represent communities where you learn to turn the furnace down at night. We learned that years ago.

People haven't seen anything yet, mark my word, because once the winter heating season comes around—it's just about here. Last weekend, for the first time this year, I turned the furnace on in my house. When I got home, it was 50 degrees Fahrenheit. I figured it was time. I kept it down around 64 degrees, but that's okay.

But you see, if you've got little kids, little babies, crawling on the floor, you can't keep it at 64, can you? If you're a couple of older folks or even one older folk, the prospect of a cool, damp house is pretty painful because your ability to adjust and adapt simply changes.

You just watch as these winter months come upon us and the cold, cold January and February winds blow, and that furnace fan is going darned near 24 hours a day. People are just going to be knocked flat on their backs by the electricity bills they'll get, come these winter months.

It seemed to be fair in the summertime. Even on the hottest days, you could perhaps turn the air conditioner down a little bit or maybe turn it off from time to time. You could turn it off at night when the sun's gone down and it's a little cooler outside. You could turn it off when there's a little bit of a breeze and you can open the windows, and the screen will let the breeze into the house. But you can't do that in the wintertime with heating, can you?

Then we've got a Premier who's so out of touch, so aloof, so arrogant. Just a minute; I'm looking for some speaking notes here that I've been relying upon pretty consistently over the last several weeks. "McGuinty Sinking: Poll Shows...."; 76% of Ontarians say they would like to see another party in power.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's noted. I've got the preacher behind me, and I've got the celebrant to my right.

And 86% of Ontarians say, "It is harder now than it was two years ago to make ends meet." You heard me mention it this morning. Let's assume there is a four-point margin of error, and 76% of respondents say they would like to see another party in power. The Liberals may want to stand up and say, "Well, there could be a four-point margin of error; it could only be 72%." I'm sorry; there's not much comfort in that. That means it could also be 80%. That's pretty damning, isn't it? Not very comforting.

The crazy thing is that somebody in the McGuinty brain trust—I know that draws the obvious observation that that surely is an oxymoron—got all excited and enthusiastic about this particular bill, Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit. I'm sure they were bouncing up and down; they were like a puppy that's begging to be let out of the house, anxious to impress the brain trust in the Premier's office that this bill was going to be the silver bullet, that this bill was the bill that was going to turn around these sad, sorry, pathetic poll numbers because it was a children's activity tax credit.

But it hasn't sold very well, has it? This government is trying to peddle Edsels long after the Edsel brand has been all but destroyed. People don't buy this stuff. People are smarter than that—a heck of a lot smarter than that.

As a matter of fact, this bill was out and about on September 13 after it received first reading. The poll that reports that 76% of Ontarians would like to see another party in power occurred after this bill was introduced for first reading. So if the government thought that this bill was going to have an impact on voters and was going to persuade voters that somehow the McGuinty Liberals were even close to being responsive, interested, concerned and effective about the concerns of average Ontarians, why, that's surely not the case—not the case at all, is it?

1550

I'm amazed and impressed because I get letters on almost a regular basis, and I'm sure other members of the Legislature do, too: letters from parents of kids in elementary school and letters that have attached to them little notices from the school that talk about the parents having to send activity fees back to school with their kids. I'm not talking about pizza night once a month, or pizza lunch, whatever the heck it is. I'm talking about significant fees that kids are compelled to take back to their school to pay for everything from athletic activities to sports activities to integral, core educational activities. Speaker, I think you, with your professional background, understand that full well.

Parents are increasingly being called upon to privately support what should be the public education of their kids, whether it's in elementary school or high school. The pressures on those families are profound. Again, these aren't optional activities. And that's not to say that even optional activities—because the pressure put on a kid who can't afford to engage in optional activities is a cruel pressure. Families are writing to me on a regular basis, and I know they're writing to my colleagues in the NDP. I'm sure—I'll bet you dollars to doughnuts—that they're writing to Liberals and Conservatives as well.

The privatization of public education under the McGuinty regime is a dramatic one, and it's a very, very troubling one. That's why that same poll says that 86% of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. In other words, in the last two years, Ontarians are saying, "Have things gotten better? No, they've gotten worse"—not just a few Ontarians, not just a handful, not just 20% or 30% or 40%, but 86%.

Once again, let's talk about margins of error. Some Liberal might stand up and say, "If it's 86% and there's a four-point of margin of error, it can be only 82%." But if it's 86% and there's a four-point margin of error, it can also be 90%. That means it's the precious, rare Ontarian who's not worse off in the last two years of Dalton McGuinty and the HST.

College and tuition fees: We're number 10 out of 10. We're ranked bottom; we're in the basement, and there's no sign of anything coming from this government that's going to lift us out of that basement.

The HST, in the basement when it comes to college and university funding; tuition fees that are escalating, yes; and there has been some concern by a whole lot of folks that, in the midst of this, Dalton McGuinty, while he's off in Hong Kong, would announce \$30 million worth of scholarships for Ph.D. students from offshore.

I've got nothing against higher education—nothing at all. Ph.D. students: You've got bright, capable young people with huge potential right here in Ontario who can't finish their bachelor's degrees or their first two- or three-year college diploma because the debt load simply becomes too unbearable; intolerable. Isn't that a crime? I've got kids coming into my constituency office—just like my colleagues in the NDP do, just like Conservatives do, and I'm sure Liberals do—who are in their third year of an honours BA. I sit there trying to persuade them, as hard as I can, to not drop out, because they're three quarters of the way through. But in three years of a four-year honours BA, they've ratcheted up \$60,000, \$65,000 or \$70,000 of debt. They know that a BA is not very likely any more to get you a job; you at least need a professional degree after that, be it a teaching diploma, a veterinarian degree, a medical degree, an engineering degree or—dare I say it?—a lawyer.

Then, because of the incredible competition for, amongst other things, medical school and law school, what are young people doing? They're getting master's degrees, right? Not because it was a part of their original post-secondary education plan, but because that puts them in a little bit better position for the highly competitive law schools and medical schools. So they get master's degrees.

I've been over across the road here to the U of T medical school talking to those students. You've got students over there literally with Ph.D.s because they were biding time waiting to get into medical school because of the scarce seats in medical school. That, to me, is just an incredibly dramatic background to a Premier who stands up in Hong Kong and announces \$30 million worth of scholarships—40 grand a pop, \$40,000 a year for Ph.D. students.

I know the Premier gets all wrapped up and caught up in all this Florida-Martin stuff coming out of U of T, this sort of New Age kind of thinking. I know all about it. These are the guys—and the Premier seems to be impressed with them. I was here at their press conference a year ago down at the Queen's Park press gallery and they were commenting on people who lose jobs. This

was Messrs. Florida and Martin. They say, "You've got to think outside the box." So I'm on the edge of my seat. I want to hear what these high-priced people—because it's high-priced help, I tell you. They've got degrees and doctorates and honoraries, this and that, and they've got the nice cufflinks, the fancy ties and the silk stuff. I'm not sure whether they were wearing any of those chunky rings but, in my mind, it was there.

I'm sitting on the edge of my seat because they're saying, "You've got to think outside the box if you lose your job, maybe in Welland, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins or Kenora—Rainy River. You've got to think outside the box." "Well, tell us. Tell us exactly what it is that you mean." They say, "Well, think about it. You lose your job. In effect, you could open a beauty parlour. You could open an art gallery."

Honest to God, Speaker, they said that. I darned near swallowed my bubble gum. You're going to take some guy—John Deere, 35 years; he's a smart welder, a capable welder—and you're going to tell him to open a beauty salon. You're going to tell him to open an art gallery? For Pete's sakes, why don't you put a tutu on him and send him down the road to dance the ballet? It makes just about as much sense, doesn't it? That is an insult.

There are folks around here who remember long enough and enjoy making the reference to old Mr. Harris's usage of the word "hula hoop" operators when he was talking about what he perceived to be some defunct or obsolete professions. Let me tell you, the Florida and Martin solution was certainly no less insulting than the hula hoop reference of old Mr. Harris; no less insulting at all.

We've got kids in despair. In an industrial community like where I come from, kids who maybe didn't have some of the academic skills of others but were good at math, who were good with their hands, who were good at building things and making things, could go into any number of honourable trades and they'd earn a good living at them.

The industrial town like I come from, or Port Colborne just south of me, Thorold just north of me or St. Catharines a little bit further north than that, if you were a welder, a pipefitter, a carpenter or a mason—I'm not talking about a Freemason. I'm talking about a stonemason or a mason. If you knew how to do those things, you could earn a pretty darned good living back when there were real jobs in real industries. Most of those jobs were union jobs, too. We've lost over 300,000 of them in the last four, five or six years, haven't we, and never got them back. You lose 300,000-plus union jobs, good incomes, good wages, good salaries, pensions—huh, pensions—health benefits. More often than not, if you had a job at John Deere, you were part of the St. Catharines GM plant before it was reduced to a mere fraction of its former size, or you worked at Atlas Steels, Page-Hersey, Union Carbide or E.G. Marsh down in Port Colborne, where there were things like bursaries for your kids when they went to college or university—not

scholarships, bursaries. The scholarships are good for the kids who excel academically. Not every kid is going to excel academically, for any number of good reasons, but those unionized jobs sent kids to college and university.

1600

Now I've got young people in my community in despair, and I've got their grandparents and great-grandparents even sadder. Those people come into my constituency office too, and I know they come in my colleagues' constituency offices. They tell me how much they'd like, how much they'd love, to be able to give a grandkid or even a great-grandkid 1,000 bucks or a couple of thousand bucks at the beginning of the college or university school year to help that kid pay off some tuition. They can't do it anymore. Their property taxes have skyrocketed, as I told you, because of the de-industrialization of Ontario by Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals, which has transferred assessment onto residential homeowners, the same senior citizens who pay for their houses once, twice, maybe three times, depending how many times they've mortgaged them to send their own kids, never mind their grandkids, to college and university. And then the electricity rates of Mr. McGuinty's not-so-smart stupid meters were imposed, along with the HST. Then, oh, yes, we're getting an economic statement come Thursday.

Andrea Horwath, the leader of the New Democratic Party, has been pressing the government along with other New Democrats to give us some sign, some indication that there is going to be some relief from the incredible burden imposed on Ontario families and Ontario seniors and Ontario's youth by this McGuinty Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I just heard somebody from the other side say, "We'll have to wait." We fear we've waited too long. There's no more time. See, what you've got is 76% of Ontarians saying that they would like to see another party other than the Liberals in power, and you've got 86% of Ontarians saying that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. There's some very clear writing on the wall, isn't there?

I've seen it happen. Man, I was here when the Peterson government didn't just stumble and fall, it crashed. I was here in 1995, when Mr. Rae took that government into third party status. I was here seven years ago when the Conservatives, who had elected two consecutive majority governments, were tossed. You know what? In October 2011—look, I don't want to be presumptuous about this, but I see the signs. I see the signs pretty darn clearly. As I told you this morning, when you walk past the Liberal caucus room, you can smell the fear. You see Liberal backbenchers in their seats and you can see the anxiety and apprehension. You go to the shelf in the library on resumé preparation, and there's not a single book in its place. They've all been taken out. And I understand.

The problem is, when somebody walks into your caucus room, your government caucus room, and tries to

peddle stuff like Bill 99 as somehow the saviour of a failing government, you're being sold a bill of goods. You're the victim of a snake oil salesperson. You notice how I avoided salesman, saleswoman? Salesperson: I'm very 2010. You're being sold a bill of goods. You're being sold snake oil in a way that the public won't allow itself to be sold, or bought, for that matter. Nobody's going to oppose this legislation. Nobody is going to vote against it. As I said, \$50 on a \$500 investment is better than a kick in the head. But there's a whole lot of things that are better than a kick in the head, I can tell you that right now, a whole lot of things.

My amazement is with the lack of embarrassment by government members about this kind of legislation or, for that matter, any number of bills that we've seen over the last several weeks, never mind months or years. This morning, it was the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act—oh, come on. Or the big one, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, the one that's not going to end outrageous ticket speculation, and the one that targets Ticketmaster and their little sub-company—I can't remember. What is the name of their sub-company?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: TicketsNow.

Mr. Peter Kormos: TicketsNow, yes. But it doesn't address any of the other resellers in all of Ontario, Canada or North America, even though the legislation is there. The government stood up and said that it's not going to be proactive in pursuing scalpers; it's going to wait for complaints.

Members of the New Democratic Party have pointed out during the course of this debate on Bill 172, as have Conservatives, that the existing Ticket Speculation Act permits this government to bust not just the guy—the member for Thornhill, earlier today, told us about how he stiffed his wife and didn't take her to the Barbra Streisand concert. And I apologize to Mrs. Shurman right here and now. I've met her. She's a lovely lady, a delightful woman, and if there's anybody who deserved to see Barbra Streisand, it was Mrs. Shurman. Mr. Shurman was doing well at the time—he was doing much better than he is now in terms of income—and would have had no trouble covering the cost of the ticket. I know that for a fact. And if he didn't want to go, buy her the ticket, send her in and meet her two hours later when the concert is over.

You see, it isn't just about the interesting character in the leather—usually they wear the long leather coats, not the motorcycle jackets. The scalpers I've seen around the old Maple Leaf Gardens were in long leather jackets—interesting characters. The guys, years ago—I used to run into them in joints like Norm's Open Kitchen on Dundas Street. You don't want to go there, Speaker. The cops shut it down a couple of years after I was in. It's just down from the Warwick Hotel. You don't want to go there, either. That was shut down as well. But they're sort of colourful characters. So with this Ticket Speculation Act, we're not talking about the characters standing there; we're talking about big computerized Internet website companies, corporations that apparently use

website technology to buy up huge blocks of tickets, with a couple of buttons being pressed. Again, it's smoke and mirrors. You pick it up, and it just falls apart in your hands and blows away like dust in the wind.

So here we've got another one of these dust-in-the-wind kind of bills. It's not going to change very many people's lives at all. It's going to change a few people's lives just a tiny little bit, but nowhere near overcome or compensate for or adjust for the damage, the harm, the injury that this government has done to those families and their kids. I suspect it won't have a single bit of impact on decisions to send a kid to any one of the activities, be it summer camp, be it dance lessons, be it visual arts, be it tutoring and academic subjects, those things, because the family has to pay out up front.

Families don't have the money. Get it? Families have been decimated. Some 86% of Ontarians say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. That's a very meaningful number. It's not imaginary; it's not a pretend number. And understand this: Before people will say that to a pollster, they are going to really, really mean it. You know that, Speaker. You've got a constituency office. You've got people calling you just like we've got people calling the rest of us. There hasn't been a day gone by in months now that Andrea Horwath and the NDP haven't stood up with story after story, tale after tale, narrative after narrative of women, men, families, seniors, kids who have been hammered by Mr. McGuinty and his Liberal government.

1610

One of the Conservative members very cleverly—again, it was the member for Thornhill, who talked about being out on the lake and somebody throwing you a 200-foot length of rope but you're 300 feet out. They think they've engaged in a grand gesture by throwing you the 200-foot rope, but you're 300 feet out. You can't reach it, and you drown anyways. People out there in the real Ontario are drowning. The body can only tread water so long. They've lost their capacity to tread water. They're going under.

I wish we could just accelerate the clock—not the clock here in the chamber, but the clock, the calendar, so that this was August 2011, because people deserve that. People deserve the chance to go to the polls as promptly as possible and send this government a message that they'll never forget and, indeed, grab a lifeline. Folks, voters out there: Grab a lifeline and then start that long, slow, difficult, arduous process of undoing the damage that McGuinty and his Liberals have done to Ontario and its residents.

Thank you kindly. The member for Toronto—Danforth, who is our critic in this area, will be addressing this matter. I suspect there's going to be a member from the official opposition speaking to it first. I look forward to hearing Mr. Tabuns's comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes talking about the children's activity tax credit.

The member who just spoke went a little bit all over the place. A lot of things were important things; let's not say that they weren't. But sometimes I find it hard to really understand where the opposition really is. I remember, in the seven years I've been in this House, when the federal government introduced the federal children's fitness tax credit. If I remember correctly, at least I know the official opposition—I'm sure the third party as well—lobbied this government to bring in something similar to help those kids, to help those families. I remember that clearly. So what did we do some time after that? We listened. We actually listened to the opposition. That's what is frustrating. We listened, we looked at what the federal government did and we did one a little bit better. We did one somewhat extensively better, I think. So now it's not good enough.

I haven't heard one of them say what they would do. I remember in question period, time after time, they kept on saying, "Well, do what the federal government did. They're thinking of families." So we did that. Yes, their role is to scrutinize what the government is doing, but it would also be nice to know what they're proposing, and frankly, I haven't heard that.

On a personal note, I have nine grandkids, and about six or seven of them are benefiting from this, so—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure today, again. The member from Welland always brings it to the kitchen table—that's what I like about him—and he does it with an experience in this Legislature so that it speaks to the issue but also speaks to where we've been on the issue.

In this case here, I think he mirrors much of what I'm hearing in my riding: This is simply a cynical ploy, thinking that young children will be helped. He started by saying that, first of all, you have to spend \$500 to get \$50. Now, if you spend \$500 under the McGuinty new tax regime, it's 13% tax, which is about \$65, and it wouldn't only be \$500. If you're in hockey, for instance, it could be \$1,500—some people are saying it's \$2,000—and you only get back this amount. I think it's a cynical ploy, and that's kind of how he started off.

He made other references to making it a kitchen table issue and helping the people to understand this. Don't be fooled by your own money, because you've already spent it.

What about the poor people who can't? What we are saying is this: This is completely unfair because it doesn't allow seniors who want to take lessons in tai chi or belong to a walking club or something like that to participate in an active lifestyle.

Let's go one step further: The HST was simply implemented without a lot of thought. It isn't a skilful tax; it's a blatant tax grab. We know that. Both parties in opposition here have been trying to make it clear that you went too deep, too fast.

I commend the member from Welland.

The member from Northumberland is a humble man—and much to be humble about. The thing is, really—

Laughter.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I meant that in a positive way, because—

Mr. Jeff Leal: That was a low blow.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, the point he was trying to make was that the member from Welland wasn't qualified. I'm repeating what Churchill said; it's not one of my own statements.

The Churchill dinner is tonight, and I think the member from Peterborough would be well advised to attend that dinner.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech that was made by my colleague the member from Welland. He's right. He put the whole thing in the larger context. We are in a province, the management of which, by this Liberal government, is seeing a declining economy, a reduction in opportunities for families, a reduction in the standard of living for seniors.

When we object to the approach this government has taken on this tax credit, it isn't because we think there's anything wrong with giving people a \$50 tax credit as a way of helping pay for kids' activities; it's because so many families find they don't have the money that they could use, that they would use, for music lessons, art lessons, sports, football, soccer. People find they are stretched to the limit and, quite rightly, their anger about that finds a home with Dalton McGuinty, finds a target with Dalton McGuinty, because the mismanagement of this province and its economy, the driving down of the standard of living in Ontario, sits on their shoulders.

When we talk about this particular measure simply coming into being so that somewhere on a brochure there will be a bullet point saying "\$50 credit for kids' lessons," we say that because so much has been abandoned, let go, undermined by this government that when all that people are given is a line on a brochure and a promise of \$50, we see that as cynical.

It's not a measure that anyone in this room would stand against, but it's a measure that this government has brought forward because it has failed in so many other areas.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm developing a bit of a cold, but I'll try to go on.

I'm pleased to speak about the children's activity tax credit.

I want to tell you that in my travels in my riding and outside my riding, I've really noticed what seems to be a proliferation of dance studios. I don't know if it has something to do with what we see on TV—a lot of people dancing. There are many shows in that regard. So, to this bill, I had a gentleman who is a part owner in one of these dance studios call and ask me whether this would apply to his business. These people are already dancing, but they will now be able to take this tax credit as an advantage to them. He did mention that a lot of

them are young girls—very young and up to high school etc. He said it's one of those activities that women can take part in, and he thinks that's why there's a growth there, as opposed to some other athletic endeavours—which dance is, but not really what one might classify as a sport.

1620

The opposition keeps talking about the dollar amounts per person or the \$500 threshold, but this has an estimated \$75-million-per-year advantage. That dance studio operator welcomed this. They are already dancing. This may allow others to take that up as well, and also other opportunities such as the sports that have been mentioned, language and music opportunities etc. So I fully support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly. I appreciate those comments. I'm particularly cognizant of the member for Durham, because he points out that on something like a dance lesson—\$500—the new HST component on that at 8%—have I got that right? The 5% was there before. Brian Mulroney and Stephen Harper's GST was already there, and now we've got Dalton McGuinty imposing a brand new tax, an additional tax of 8%. But let's still figure it out: With \$500—let's make it \$600, okay? You get 10% of it back on up to \$500, which is \$50. But on \$600, the new tax is \$48. So what are you left with? Doughnuts, nada, zero, kooratz—I'll help Hansard with the translation, or the spelling of that shortly—zippo, de nada. On \$600, with the new tax of 8%, that's \$48 of new tax. You get—okay, parliamentary language—bollocks.

This is a little bit of some legerdemain, some sleight of hand, the David Copperfield "look over there while I take it over here." Have you ever been in one of those nightclubs where the guy gets your watch off you within 30 seconds? You don't even know what's there and all of a sudden it's in his pocket. I've seen these operators work. You go to New York city, on 8th Avenue, and they've got the three-card monte. Find the one-eyed jack. Have you ever done that? They'll let you win a couple of times if you're lucky. I was lucky a couple of times. The cops came by. They had to pick up stuff and move on, and I had the money. But of course, if you play long enough, which is only four or five minutes into the game, you end up with nothing.

This government is a proverbial slot machine. You keep feeding it, but it gives you nothing back.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's the second time today, Speaker, that this has happened. Liberals don't want to debate, so we'll talk for a little while. I'm interested to add my comments on Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit—or, as I like to call this, backtrack on the HST, revision number 9. Because that's what we're dealing with, and it's not the first time. So here we go again.

To start, the Progressive Conservative caucus recognizes that any relief in these tough economic times is welcomed by families all over Ontario, but, you know, what this amounts to, and it's not the first time we've seen it, is throwing crumbs to somebody who is extremely hungry. There's more than just a small element of cynicism in it, I find.

I rose in this House to join in the debate when we discussed the northern energy credit, and it was very much like this. It amounted to a very small piece of change when you compared it to what had to be spent. And it is, regardless of what anyone says to the contrary, a reaction of this government to a hastily devised plan to deal with its own deficit called the HST, and now it has to backtrack by bringing in small credits.

We've heard very eloquently from the member for Welland what we're talking about when we do the math. If you're looking at \$50, to get back that \$50, that's 10% of \$500 that you've spent on whatever it may be, hockey equipment for a young man in the family, ringette equipment, tennis lessons—whatever it happens to be. You spend the \$500; you get back the \$50. It's all processed by the CRA at the end of the year, so if you even have the \$500 dollars to begin with, which is more and more rare in this province in the direction that we're going, you have to wait all that period of time. The challenge with this is constantly that Liberals legislate first—I said this this morning—and then they try to fix things afterwards, and that's what they're doing with this.

Of course there's not going to be any opposition when it comes to a vote for this because a little bit of something is better than a lot of nothing. But it doesn't mean that the opposition is happy, and nobody should credit us with being on the side of the government when it comes to voting for this.

The challenge with anything this government does or brings forward is that it's not authentic. It is about diverting attention away from their policies that have hurt Ontario families.

Just today, a document arrived in my hands from Sussex group labelled "privileged and confidential" about energy matters. What it talks about is obfuscating—I'll use the word "confusing"—confusing people so that they don't understand that the energy initiatives of this government, while laudable if you take them only in the context of being green, are going to cost people so dearly—indeed, already are—that there are people who will not be able to retain their houses. I quote from the document: "In this, it will be critical to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price to include key value attributes such as jobs, clean air, farm income, etc. Renewables cannot be defined by price alone." That is a direct quote from what was a privileged document, and it talks about what this government does; it talks about confusing people.

You put an HST out there at 13%, adding 8% to things that are already subject to GST, 13% to things that were not—and I'm talking about services here in the province of Ontario—and then you confuse the issue by back-

tracking through bills like Bill 99, where you're going to hand back a small amount to get a larger amount. Does that sound fair? No, but it does sound like Ontario.

The McGuinty government has brought in a long line of increases in the last little while to family budgets that people know very well. I would enumerate increases in hydro, estimated to drive up household hydro bills by 43% by 2015, adding \$732 a year—and that's just when you take hydro rates. It doesn't look at what's already happened at the home level, when people open those hydro bills and find four new line items on that bill:

—a \$3-billion HST tax grab that I've been referring to that's supposed to be offset by income tax changes, but clearly is not;

—a secret eco tax that they tried to sleaze through on the same day as the HST was introduced and got caught red-handed;

—auto insurance reforms that will force families to pay more and get less in return; and

—parents now having to pay about \$570 per family for school supplies.

I could add to that, because there are things that go under the radar unnoticed—the dearth of available dollars at the school level. I was being told a story last week by somebody whose daughter-in-law is a teacher, and a good teacher, in the Toronto District School Board, who puts her own hand into her own purse to pay for supplies for her class because the money just isn't there. That is a result of what's going on here in Ontario. We're going to get the fall economic statement in a couple of days, and it's going to say that the deficit isn't quite as huge as it was originally going to be, but it's still gargantuan and it's going to take years to address and get things back into line and into balance.

What we're looking at in this bill falls right in line with all of this. This is about confusing the issue: HST, tax credits; tax credits, HST. "Yes, Mr. And Mrs. Ontario, you have to pay this extra amount of money through a new tax that was brought in on July 1. But don't worry, Mr. And Mrs. Ontario: You'll get back \$50 if you spend \$500"—if you even have \$500 to spend on your child.

The act provides for a children's activity credit for taxation years after 2009. The qualifying activities include programs like physical activity, instruction in music, dramatic arts, dance, visual arts, language, development of intellectual skills, interpersonal skills, enrichment and/or tutoring. When I hear myself mouth those words, I think, what are we talking about in terms of the amount of dollars that are expended here, and how much extra are those things costing because of the application of the harmonized sales tax since July? How many of those things have done a couple of things: deprive children whose parents could no longer afford to engage in some of those expenditures, as well as deprive the suppliers of some of those services because people can no longer afford to take advantage?

1630

The maximum tax credit, as I've mentioned, is \$50 per qualifying child, calculated as 10% of up to \$500 of

qualifying expenses, and an additional \$50 for a qualifying child with a disability. The amount of the eligible expense is then indexed starting in 2011—so next year—and the credit will be claimed in annual income tax under the act and administered by the Canada Revenue Agency. The province will not be writing cheques. So the very first chance you get to put your hands on those dollars is after you've filed your tax return next April.

The next question that this begs in my mind is, does this government have anything particular against seniors? This is about children's activities; it's the children's activity tax credit. Is there anything wrong with looking at people who live on a fixed income, the seniors in our province? We know that the largest cohort in the province after 2017 is going to be over 65. In my riding of Thornhill, for example, and I think this is parallel to most ridings, there are seniors' clubs, very active people engaged in all kinds of activities, whether it's dance or senior sports or social clubs. They cost money to run; supplies cost money. These are the folks who are on fixed incomes. These are the people who were hurt the worst during the economic downturn. These are the people who have been hit the hardest when they're trying to stay in their homes because of the electricity bills that they are receiving, which are no longer in there and budgeted for. These are the people who are paying HST that also wasn't budgeted for. And these are the people who had to drain a piece of their principal when there was a downturn in the markets over the course of the past two years and no longer have that same principal kicking out the same dividends that they counted on for their pension—because, as we all know, this is Ontario, where only 30% of people have defined benefit pension plans and 70% are people just like me and most of you watching. There are people who don't have a pension at the end of the day, and let me repeat for the audience at home once again: We here in the Ontario Legislature don't get a pension either, so we have to provide for ourselves, like many of you.

What's wrong with a seniors' tax credit, pittance though it may be, being applied on seniors' activities as well? There's no reason in the world why that shouldn't exist.

You remember the McGuinty Liberals tried this same thing with Bill 109, the "we had better give the seniors a break" bill. That was Bill 109. This government would have been better off bringing my private member's bill to fruition. That was two years ago. It looked at a deferral on property tax with interest at no cost to the province and it was roundly rejected by a whipped vote on the part of the government. That's a bill that deserved to see the light of day. There is no real relief for seniors, not seniors living a day-to-day life here in Ontario. And now, they're trying to appease parents by giving them \$50 at the end of the year. They think that by throwing 50 bucks at families, they'll forget about the HST, rising hydro costs, increased gas prices—and the list goes on and on.

Look at the gas prices. I was filling up my car the other day at \$1.10 per litre, which seems to be—

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's 99.6 in Peterborough.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Is it going down to 99.6? Oh, heavens, I have arrived. That'll make me my fortune.

But the point is, I filled it up at \$1.10 per litre—I filled it up last week in the States—and I was looking at that famous sticker that you see on the gas pump at every Ontario gas station, and it says, "Federal excise tax, 10.3 cents." Then it says, "Ontario tax, 14.7 cents." Then it says, "HST, 13%." All of that is going in there to contribute to that \$1.10 or 99.7, as my friend from Peterborough says, whatever it happens to be.

The point is, if you're a senior on a fixed income or if you're a father or a mom who's driving the carpool every single day and you're filling up that tank every two or three days because you have to get around, you're hurting, you're feeling that, and you're getting no tax credit for that. You're getting what the McGuinty government tells us is a quid pro quo on income tax, but it's simply not true.

When it comes to that fall economic statement at the end of this week, and we hear that the deficit has been somewhat more addressed than originally anticipated, we know how it's been addressed. It's been addressed because of the excess revenues that you guys have been collecting since July 1, courtesy of the HST. It's just that simple.

This tax credit is basically negligible. If you do the math, the HST on about \$500 worth of children's activities is \$40 already, so where exactly is the relief? I get another 10 bucks. Whoop-de-do. I can buy lunch. That's what it comes down to.

Maybe they should have looked at removing the tax altogether on children's activities. Now, that would make a difference. That would make a difference, the same as it would make a difference if, on Thursday, when you announce what that fall statement looks like, the fall financial update, you said something like, "We're going to take the HST off gasoline." I'm not holding my breath. This is typical of the McGuinty Liberals. Their policies are more about optics than providing real relief for Ontario's families, as the document from Sussex suggests when it comes to energy. Let's confuse the public. Let's make sure that we paint the PCs—it's interesting here: "As renewable energy is also anticipated to be a wedge issue in the election, with the PCs supporting a move away from renewables, this effort should consolidate industry and non-industry stakeholders in rallying support for a continued focus on green power...."

Who says the Progressive Conservative caucus is not for renewables? That document does. Let's confuse. Let's confuse. So we're debating a bill today that's also designed to confuse: "Oh, yes, we put the HST on you, but don't worry: \$50 back on \$500 that you've spent." Maybe they thought that this would soften the blow for your next hydro bill or the next time you went to that gas station to fill up your car.

Another insight about this bill is that, due to Premier McGuinty's poor fiscal management, parents can't even begin to sign their children up for sports or extra-

curricular activities. They can't afford it in McGuinty's Ontario. They can't afford it. This Premier has put parents in the position of now saying, "Do you want to eat or do you want to play hockey?" As my colleague from Nepean-Carleton said in a previous debate, "They're basically trying to undo the damage that they have done by putting HST on children's sports registration. So, when parents start to enrol their children in ringette or indoor soccer, or the big ticket item, hockey, they want to soften the blow."

The Progressive Conservative caucus of Tim Hudak brought the idea of a tax credit forward two years ago, and it was rejected by the government. Moreover, the provincial government won't even be writing the cheques and families who do qualify won't receive those cheques until the end of the year, so how does that help them now?

My friend from Welland, when he spoke earlier, talked about something that I had raised a month ago. It was humorous, but it wasn't so funny. It was the story of the rope. This is another example of the Dalton McGuinty Liberals—the Premier coming out and saying, "I see that you're drowning 40 feet from shore, and I'm going to throw you this rope to save your life." He throws out a 30-foot rope, and then the finance minister comes to his defence in question period or with the media and says, "The Premier has met you more than half-way"—not funny; absolutely true, and a tragedy.

Once again, this government thinks they can cover up, take the focus off their ill-conceived policies by handing out a very small cheque, a cheque that people will only get if they save their receipts, file their income tax on time and can wait till next year.

Bill 99 is just the latest Liberal distraction.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions.

Mr. Bob Delaney: What an interesting diatribe. The same party that supported the HST right up until the day that our government introduced it now says it supported the idea of children's tax credits right up until the day our government introduced them. They don't know whether they're coming or going. What a slap in the face to people in cities like Mississauga where they have to send their children, our children, to attend their activities, and we have come up with a better alternative to children's activities than the one introduced by the federal government.

1640

The member opposite didn't mention that it was a refundable tax credit, which means it goes to you even if your income falls below the levels of taxation and you would not otherwise collect the federal one, but you will collect the provincial one. It's worth 10% of any activity, not just sports, up to a limit of \$500 per child—in other words, about a \$50 tax credit—and that's doubled if your child is disabled. Why don't these people over there support assistance to children and their families in the 905 area? I don't understand it. The member himself comes from the 905 belt, and he's going against the

interests of his own constituents. They don't understand it.

This is just the latest that we see of—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I'm concerned that the member from Mississauga—Streetsville isn't paying attention, because—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: The point of order that the member is thinking of is 23(b)(i), and it has not been violated.

This is just an example of a party that doesn't know whether they're coming or going.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to provide a couple of comments in response to the eloquent address by the member for Thornhill, and as some of you will know, we are supporting Bill 99.

It's a very, very small level of assistance. I think I can speak with some thought and knowledge of the HST since—I've got to thank the McGuinty government—it was probably a great reason why people came out to the polls and supported me in the March election, because people were extremely upset. Even since then—we just came from constituency week when I got to talk to a lot of people. I held a constituency day in a township office in my riding, in Elizabethtown-Kitley, and I had a number of people come and talk to me about their concerns.

They brought their hydro bills. They talked to me about their difficulty in making ends meet since the HST. When you look at a \$50 rebate when some of them are faced with three times their hydro bill—I read a number of emails last week, when we had the opposition day motion from the third party, from people very concerned about being able to keep their homes. They're not worried about spending \$500 or \$600 or \$1,000 putting their kids through hockey and getting 50 bucks back; they're worried about keeping their homes. This is a fundamental issue that the government just doesn't get, and I think the member for Thornhill made some extremely excellent points.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to get on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Thornhill made a very competent contribution to this discussion, to this debate, something we have learned to expect from him on a regular basis. One of the points that he makes most validly is that somehow the Liberal backbenchers, the government backbenchers, think that two-minute questions and comments constitute participating in the debate. You should know, Speaker—of course, you know; you're the steward of the rules here—that each of these Liberal members has a right to take the floor for 20 minutes and explain to their constituents why they, the Liberals, think this thing, this bill, is the greatest thing since sliced bread, because it's far from it. That's one of the obvious

reasons why those same government backbenchers, those Liberals, those Liberals who confront 76% of their constituents when they go home on weekends—if indeed they do go home, knowing that 76% of the constituents that they meet want them to be replaced at Queen's Park. That's what that poll means: that 76% of Ontarians want a different party in power.

I'm grateful for the contribution by the member from Thornhill. However, I'm very much looking forward to the participation in this debate by the member from Toronto–Danforth, who's the NDP critic in this matter, the NDP finance critic. He has a cutting and skilful analysis of the shortcomings of this bill. By the time he is finished, this government won't know whether it's been drilled, punched or bored. He is going to thoroughly eviscerate the government benches, and I look forward to that. It's a sport, a bloody one, but it's one that we've grown accustomed to and affectionate of here in Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm looking for another two minutes. Yes, the member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen very intently to my colleague from the riding of Thornhill. But it's interesting: During constituency week break, I went to my favourite coffee shop in Peterborough, the East City Coffee Shop on Hunter Street, operated by the Sina family, who are Albanians who escaped the revolution in 1956. But do you know what we talked about? They have a young family. They work hard every day to run that coffee shop: 4 a.m. in the morning. But they had kids who were playing indoor basketball, soccer and other activities from 1995 to 2003. The member from Thornhill forgot about this particular period of our history in the province of Ontario, when community groups could not get access to gyms on the weekend because the costs were prohibitive. I know—I've talked to the Sina family—many, many groups, basketball groups, indoor soccer groups, that couldn't get access to the gyms because of the prohibitive costs that were placed by the previous government.

One of the things that we brought in was a program for community use of facilities on weekends, where we would provide school boards with those dollars to cover the costs of custodians who have to come in on Friday nights and Saturdays and Sundays at time and a half. Many groups couldn't afford that during those days. We brought that program in. We opened up public facilities so our children in our communities like Peterborough had the opportunity to participate in indoor soccer, basketball, Scouts, Guides, you name it. They finally got access to public facilities that they were entitled to do.

So if you want to talk about—and they're going to vote for this credit—how we're helping children, let's look at the full perspective. For eight years, they barred kids from using our public facilities on the weekends.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Thornhill has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I appreciate the comments, even the negative ones. I appreciate all the comments from my

colleagues. Going from last to first, my colleague from Peterborough talks about the coffee shop in Peterborough. I'm sure I've been there once or twice. I guess you've been there often. They may be talking about what you say, but I can tell you that if you go to the Centre Street Deli in Thornhill, they're talking about other things. They're talking about the fact that it costs a heck of a lot more to drive there in their cars and to pay for their kids' activities and to send their kids to school because of the additional costs of supplies that the schools are no longer supplying. They talk about those things, and they talk an awful lot, in that delicatessen, that restaurant, and at doors, when I knock in Thornhill, about what's going to happen in the fall of 2011. That's the conversation that you want to be having, my friend from Peterborough.

As to his colleague, the Liberal member from Mississauga–Streetsville, I'm used to the fact that that member enjoys the taste of Kool-Aid because, boy, has he ever drunk it. It amazes me how he mischaracterizes my party in saying things like we supported the HST up until the day that you brought it in. No, we said, "Wrong tax, wrong time." We meant it then. We mean it now. You can see the results of your actions.

1650

As to whether we're coming or going—because he says that our party doesn't know whether we're coming or going—I can tell you, October 2011, we're coming, and you're going.

As far as the member from Welland is concerned, he seems to concur with me insofar as how the Liberals see things, and this bill is an underscoring of that fact. Take with one hand, give back with another. Always less the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to be here speaking today. For those of you who may have engaged in this debate before, there's often a question asked in our caucus: Is it better to be on the same side as Peter Kormos or on the other side of Peter Kormos? It is not always clear. I appreciated his introduction, and I appreciated his previous remarks. I don't know if I can quite meet the bar that he has set for debate on this particular issue.

I want to start off by just taking a look at the bill itself. If you look at the items that qualify for the up to \$50 credit, you can go to dramatic arts. Just taking a quick look at websites, non-profit organizations that provide training and teaching in dramatic arts note that the HST is applied to the services, to the classes, that they are making available to the public. So if you are offering a class that costs \$100, you can get \$10 in rebate under this bill, and you will pay \$8 more in the new PST that's on top. The HST in total is 13%.

Let's be very clear about the amount of money that we're talking about here. If you are going for classes that

cost \$500, you may get a \$50 rebate, the max, but you will be paying another \$48 in sales tax. It is no understatement to say that this is a shell game. It is no overstatement to say that this is a shell game.

People may think in terms of getting that maximum \$50. I have no doubt that, come next fall when you turn on the television and you see a generous, warm, friendly Premier McGuinty walking with a family and the words in the background, "\$50 credit for making sure that these children have the sorts of lessons and classes that they deserve," they won't show the math showing that, in fact, \$48 of that \$50 has been paid back to the provincial government in HST. If you, in fact—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Not a bad commercial.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: One of the members from the other side interjected, "Not a bad commercial." He is right, because having gone through a few elections myself, I know how this stuff is turned into television commercials. My guess is that the amount of money spent on television commercials promoting the virtues of the Liberal government on this particular issue will probably exceed the value of what goes back to the people of Ontario. I have no doubt.

When you look further through this list, dance classes have to charge that 13% HST. So if you send your child to ballet, and frankly if the classes are \$100, \$200, \$500, maybe \$1,000—let's say they're \$1,000 for a full year's course. I haven't checked. I don't know if it's \$1,000. But if it comes anywhere close to that, then you may well be paying, what, \$80 more in expenses, and you may get \$50 back. In the end, you've been done in. You have been done in.

This bill is a partial refund of HST for those who are paying for these particular services. That is what people have to understand first of all: that the HST, which was brought in to provide for very substantial tax breaks for some of the biggest corporations in this province, financed by you and me, the people who are watching this Legislature right now, those HST charges will eat up most of, if not all of, the rebates that people would otherwise get from this bill.

Not only is it a shell game, but given the scale of problems that confront families and children in this province, it is an extraordinary thing to bring forward. When I speak to parents in my riding who are burdened with the cost of daycare—if they can get it—when I talk to parents in my riding who are desperate to get daycare that they can afford, listen to their phone calls, talk to them, read their emails, I know that there are profound and pressing problems.

The full-day early learning, as it has been misimplemented by this government, poses significant financial problems for parents. This bill, this maximum \$50, is not going to help in any meaningful way people who are spending \$1,000 a month to keep a daycare space open because the full-day early learning doesn't cover the summer months. In order to make sure that they have daycare during the summer, they have to pay right through the year. That's a lot of money. That issue will

be landing far more forcefully in this Legislature over the coming months, because parents are feeling desperate.

I talk to people who teach music in schools in this particular city, schools that don't have very well-off parent communities that can fundraise, and those teachers tell me how they have to simply do without instruments when those instruments break. They're gone, and so they reconfigure their class so that they can teach kids music with the instruments that are left. That is where we desperately need to make investment so we fully develop all the talents and skills of the next generation. This is a token. Compare it to what parents and children need: good, affordable, high-quality daycare; good, well-resourced art and music classes; good, well-supported sports programs, physical fitness programs. This bill falls far short of that.

I talked to my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River when this bill was first introduced. This bill doesn't address sports, but he did point out to me that even if it did address sports, the cost of the HST on his expenses to put his kids into hockey would be dwarfed by the HST that he is now having to pay. That is the reality, that parents and their children who want to be part of the sports community in this province, who want to make sure that their kids can go and exercise and develop their physical skills, build their healthy bodies, are not being helped; in fact, they're being discouraged.

This government has made substantial mistakes in terms of investments that are needed to keep the provincial economy strong. I'll mention one, and that's the not-so-smart meters. Today we had commentary from the Minister of Energy that the reason people's prices were going up so sharply is because the old meters were wrong. It's entirely possible that it isn't that the old meters were wrong—maybe they were—but it's also entirely possible that the new meters are wrong. In fact, there are complaints to Weights and Measures Canada about whether or not these meters are in fact accurate.

1700

If this government had used wisdom and applied the \$1 billion-plus that's going into smart meters to actually reducing people's energy costs and consumption by helping them by leasing out high-efficiency water heaters, solar hot water heaters and geothermal installations, that would have been a very good use of \$1 billion or billions of dollars. The final price for not-so-smart meters is not, at this point, clear.

Those sorts of actions that burden the economy of Ontario, that take money out of people's pockets for projects that in fact don't help them, undermine our future. This kind of bill, a bill designed to be the background text for a television commercial for the Premier, this kind of bill, designed to be a bullet point in a brochure for a Liberal MPP running for re-election or a Liberal candidate running to be elected, is not what Ontario needs. Ontario needs an approach to the fundamental problems that we are dealing with, not a government whose strategic focus is making sure that it has things that it can announce that will look good in election advertising. That's the heart of what's before us.

Someone on the other side has asked, "How can you be so cynical?" Madam Speaker, what I might say to you is that there are times, as the old saying goes, when just because you're paranoid, it doesn't mean that someone isn't out to get you. Just because you're cynical, it doesn't mean you're not being realistic. In this case, cynicism serves us well when dealing with an analysis of this government's approach to what is really happening in this province. This government engages in things that they can announce rather than engaging in making sure that the province functions well.

A few years ago, I was talking to the executive director of a social service agency in my riding dealing with homeless single mothers. She talked about programs this government had announced every year or two that dealt with elements of the problems that these single moms had to face. What's interesting, what she said to me, is that they run the program for a year or two, it develops a network, it meets a need, and then it's discontinued and a new and different program is announced, because each time you announce, you get to cut a ribbon; you get to send out a media release. You don't actually solve the problem, but you certainly increase the visibility of the government.

This is one of those announceables, one of those things that looks good in a television advertisement, looks good on a brochure but does not deal with the pressing needs, the pressing everyday needs, of families who need good daycare, who need investment in schools, who need investment in the classes that children need to fully develop their personalities and skills.

I would recommend that everyone in this chamber, when they're asked to vote in favour of this, just simply vote in favour of it, but everyone in this chamber should be fully aware of the substance of what Ontario needs and the lack of substance in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, before I start, I'd like to welcome Shafiq Jr. and Shamsa, the son and daughter of my seatmate, Dr. Shafiq Qadri. Welcome. I guess they came here today to learn about democracy. That's what we call early learning about democracy and politics in Ontario.

I listened to the member from Toronto–Danforth speak for almost 12 minutes. He spoke about everything, criticizing our government for introducing a very important bill to support children, to give some kind of tax break when they're trying to do some kinds of activities. He talked about early learning, about kindergarten. He forgot we invested in 35,000 children across the province of Ontario, something that had never been done in the past. I think we've taken all the steps to support our children, our kids in Ontario, to give them the best possibility to have the best place and also the best educational environment. Also, besides that, this tax credit will help mothers and fathers to support their kids to go to some kind of activity, whether it's sports or entertainment. I think it's a very important step toward strengthening our kids in the province of Ontario.

The member from Toronto–Danforth spoke about a lot of things. He talked about the smart meters. I heard him speaking negatively about smart meters. Many Ontarians still remember he is the author of the green energy stuff. If he is a great supporter of green energy, he should support the smart meters. If he also supports our future, he should support our students. If he supports the future of this province and transparency and accountability in this province, he should come forward and support any initiatives coming from this government to support families by tax credits, by opening the schools to allow students to learn and be the best in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I have to respond to the member from Toronto–Danforth. He speaks very well and explains his position very, very clearly. I liked his example of one of his constituents talking about theatre training—possibly \$100 a month. It may go for a part of a year, probably 10 months, like a school year. That would be \$1,000. That's \$25 a week for 10 months, and basically that would be \$80 in just the new PST, and you're going to get back \$50. So it's an admission. He makes the point so well that it's an admission they're going to give you back some of your tax, but you're still paying \$30 more. So it's sort of a mea culpa bill, an "excuse me" bill, "sorry I brought it up." It's an admission that they've gone too far too fast.

They've done it on the seniors' part. What's missing on this is that they shouldn't have age-limited it. It's discriminatory. They could give it to seniors to stay physically fit as well, whether it's training for osteoporosis, physical activity, tai chi. It could be for Alzheimer's, training of memory. These are appropriate, and we would be supportive.

This bill is so cynically crafted that you have to spend \$500 to get back nothing.

The member from Welland made the mistake of telling the people listening today the real story, that it's really, "Here's some of your money back, but we can't give it all back to you because we have this debt problem, because we've got a spending problem."

I think the member from Toronto–Danforth did it with a touch of class. He brought in the transit thing a bit, and he also brought in the energy debate, of which he's an expert. In his two-minute summary, I'd like him to include what it's going to do to your energy bill. It's not going to change your consumption, for people on modest income. They do want—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I was more than pleased, I was very pleased, I was excited, to listen to the member for Toronto–Danforth. I told you when I introduced him that he was going to deliver a cutting analysis, an incisive analysis of this bill, and he did.

You see, the problem is, you listen to him, just as folks have been listening to him in their homes, and there's the ring of reality, the ring of truth there. That's what people

use as their test to determine what they're prepared to believe, to assess credibility. You listen to Mr. Tabuns speak—the member for Toronto–Danforth—and it's reasonable, it makes sense, it's not illogical, and it has the ring of truth. You test it against reality, and it tests true. Common folks know that. Plain folks know that. That's how you determine the credibility of what somebody is telling you. That's in contrast to the hyperbolic fantasies of government backbenchers. Look, it's the trained seal phenomenon: Their flippers are flapping, they've got the ball on their nose, and they put on a little two-minute show, and their insincerity just oozes out of them and travels right through the TV camera into people's homes. That's how you assess that something is not credible; it's incredible.

So who are you going to believe here? I say it's very, very easy to believe the member from Toronto–Danforth. It's beyond credibility to even think of accepting what Liberal backbenchers are telling you is credible.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Sorry, you caught me by surprise. I was hyperventilating over here in response to the cynical platitudes that were being offered up.

I was thinking of these young children who were here listening to the member opposite, who was suggesting that this was nothing more than a photo op and a brochure plug. I'm sure that after he supports it, which he undoubtedly will do, there will probably be some reference in his—no, I shouldn't do that. That's just adding a deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars, and I don't want to do that.

I think it was Barack Obama who said—and I respectfully suggest the member opposite might want to heed this—that none of us are here to fear the future; we're here to shape it, to make it better. Hope is on the way. We're here to try to build a brighter tomorrow for the kids up here, and part of that is making sure they have opportunities and that we stand—language I know the member opposite will understand—in solidarity with families across Ontario.

What's possibly wrong with parents enrolling their children in recreational activities, such as organized sports, music, language and dance, who would be able to claim 10% of up to \$500 per child and up to \$1,000 for children with disabilities? It seems to me that that's the kind of Ontario we want to build.

Is it going to solve all the problems? No, it's not, but it's a step forward. Let's at least have the courage to stand in our places as men and celebrate that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the members from London–Fanshawe, Durham, Welland, and Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for their contributions.

This is not about building a brighter tomorrow. Let's be clear. You, Madam Speaker, represent people in this

city and in this province who find that their schools are in bad shape, that their kids can't get daycare, that the art classes, music classes and other classes those kids need don't have the resources they so desperately require. So when I speak about a bill that is meant to go on a brochure and be the backdrop to a television advertisement, it is because the more fundamental needs are neglected, set aside. It is because those hopes for our future are being scorned by this government that one comes to a point where one says, "This bill has far more to do with election announceables than the actual well-being of our children." Understand that when you read this legislation. Understand that this government engages in some of the most cynical practices one can find. When it makes decisions on electricity that drive up costs through bungling on not-so-smart meters, through investments in privatized nuclear power plants, and then says, "This is all because of green energy," it does not get a lot more cynical than that. It is a stretch to get much more cynical than that. But they are able to stretch; I will say that for them. They have the ability to reach very far to build the cynicism that is growing on a daily basis in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity this afternoon to debate for a few minutes Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit. As we know, we're in third reading debate; I think it's winding down about now. I did have an opportunity on second reading debate to speak at length on the bill.

The bill, as has been noted, is pretty straightforward. It's only a couple of pages in length. It's about giving families \$50 back if they're involved in sports or other activities. We're talking about families getting a bit of money back despite having paid so much more and finding it so difficult these days in Ontario.

We supported it on second reading, and our plans are to support it on third reading. But let's be clear: It is a very tiny amount of money.

I would like to briefly talk about the process we've gone through. We actually did hold public hearings. The finance and economic affairs committee held public hearings. We had all of one presenter come before the committee to comment on the bill, so there doesn't seem to be that much interest out there.

Similarly, the government has Bill 109 and other tax credits. We seem to be having one a month coming out. For that bill, we also had exactly one presenter come before the committee to present to that one as well. So there's not a whole bunch of interest in it.

I think it is more about optics, about the government being seen to be giving some money back. As the member from Toronto–Danforth talked about—

Mr. John O'Toole: Did you get this?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, I did, thank you, member from Durham.

He talked about the TV ads he pictured that they will likely be running with Premier McGuinty walking with some child to a hockey rink or whatever.

But I think it has been pointed out pretty clearly that this is a drop in the bucket for families that are facing so many increased charges, with the health tax and, of course, the HST and the eco taxes, and on and on. Greatly increased hydro bills: I was certainly hearing about it last week in the constituency. I heard from a lot of people who are finding it difficult to pay their ever-increasing hydro bills.

But as was pointed out, if you do the math on this, and if you have a couple of kids playing something like hockey, which is relatively expensive, the registration is likely going to be \$500 for the hockey. Then if you have more than one child—you basically get a bit more than you would pay on the HST back on that \$500. You pay the \$500, and you're now going to be paying 8% more on that than you did last year with the HST. So you're paying \$40, and you'll get \$50 back. You may end up plus \$10 on your next \$500 you spend, but then, for your next child, you don't get anything back. For the travel, the money you spend on gas going around the various hockey rinks, which certainly can add up—and you'll be paying HST on that—you won't get any of that back. It's a pretty tiny amount that we're talking about. I think it has a lot more to do with optics than anything else.

I would say, if the government is looking at ways to stimulate activity in the province, they certainly could look at poaching my private member's bill. I'll be happy to see them do that; that's Bill 100, which would require the province to pave the shoulders of designated provincial highways when they're rebuilt. I think that's a great way to provide more opportunity for children as well as adults to be able to get out and cycle or walk along the side of the road much more safely than they currently do. If you cycle along a provincial highway that doesn't have a paved shoulder right now, you're certainly taking your life in your hands.

I note that I was sent an email today from the Grey Bruce Health Unit. They wrote to me:

"Hello, Mr. Miller,

"The Grey Bruce Health Unit has recently learned of your Bill 100 proposing paved shoulders on provincial highways. Our Healthy Communities initiative has been focusing on opportunities for active and alternative modes of transportation as significant contributors to health, and therefore we would be interested in writing a letter of support for this bill. Could you please tell me the timelines," and they go on. That was from the health promoter at the Grey Bruce Health Unit.

The government could adopt my private member's bill and start paving the shoulders of highways. That would certainly be a great opportunity to increase opportunities for healthy living—more opportunities to safely cycle.

This bill is one very small step, but it's not going to make a huge difference, especially when people start paying the HST on everything, when they see their hydro bills going up so tremendously. Really, what we're hearing from families is that they're just falling further

and further behind, that they're finding they have less money at the end of the month than they used to have, and they're struggling. So, for a lot of families, I think they'll have a tough time even coming up with the \$500 to be able to get the \$50 back, particularly as they start to pay their hydro bills as the Green Energy Act comes into effect.

1720

The member from Thornhill talked about how the government is working with groups and has a plan to confuse the public. We received this privileged and confidential document on renewable energy matters, where they state:

"As renewable energy is also anticipated to be a wedge issue in the election, with the PCs supporting a move away from renewables"—that's what they say; that's not actually the case—"this effort should consolidate industry and non-industry stakeholders in rallying support for a continued focus on green power as important economic, social, and energy policy in Ontario.

"In this, it will be critical to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price to include key value attributes such as jobs, clean air, farm income, etc."

That's the strategy of the government: to actually try to confuse the issue so people aren't aware of how much more they're paying on their hydro bills to support some of these crazy plans that the McGuinty government has.

I just received an email from a constituent:

"I, along with a lawyer, met recently with the Ontario Power Authority to discuss what I saw as potential abuse of taxpayers' money, and the reception I received confirmed my worst suspicions.

"Under the Green Energy Act and the feed-in tariff program, the OPA is committing to pay 44 cents per kilowatt hour for 20 years to operators of 10-megawatt solar farms. The OPA confirmed to me the following"—and he goes on with a long list.

I'd just point out that he says:

"The fact that higher electricity bills will have an adverse impact on Ontario's manufacturing sector (similar to Spain's acknowledgement of the \$126-billion cost of their renewable energy policy and the attendant 20% unemployment result) is not an issue for them to consider....

"I asked why the OPA was not buying renewable energy from Hydro Quebec at an average price of 8.5 cents per kilowatt hour over the next 20 years rather than electing to pay 44 cents per kilowatt hour under these 20-year contracts...."

He goes on to estimate the cost:

"The excess cost to Ontario electricity consumers works out to be \$9 billion per 1,000 megawatts contracted for 20 years by the OPA.

"Assuming the total of these contracts may reach 5,000 megawatts, then the total excess cost to this province would come in at over \$45 billion."

I hope this constituent's not right, but he's writing to me after inquiring with the Ontario Power Authority, so I have to assume that they're accurate.

The government's strategy is to confuse the issue so that people aren't aware. But I think when they get their hydro bill and they open it up, they're going to be aware that it has gone up dramatically with the HST, with the time-of-use metering, the smart meters, the new backdoor energy costs and the Ontario Energy Board-approved increases, so that they have less money left at the end of the month to be able to spend money on things like children's activities that are covered by Bill 99. That's what Ontario residents are facing.

I'm not going to go on at length because I have had a chance to speak at second reading. There's not that much more to say about the bill. It's more about optics. We are going to support it on third reading so that people at least get the \$50 back. The government is taking a lot out of one pocket and giving a bit back to the other pocket.

With that, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member opposite speaking about the tax credit for sports activities and leisure activities for kids in Ontario, and he's saying it's not enough—\$50 on \$500. If you make the calculation, it's more than enough. It's more than the PST portion. I don't know what he's talking about.

It's very important for all of us—

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The member spoke and I listened to him and he made the argument. I'd say that whatever he said does not add up. It's very important to keep supporting the kids to get involved in activities, to help them to grow and be stronger, be intelligent in the province of Ontario.

Also, they talked about kindergarten, about daycare and all the support. I think it's a \$300-million investment in the future of this province. I think it's a great investment, because we care about the students in the province of Ontario, we care about the kids, we care about families. And 50 bucks for families is a lot of money. If you have two or three kids, you can now generate \$150, which you never got in the past.

I think it's a very important initiative, and I hope the opposition party looks at it from a positive point of view instead of a negative point of view. All of us are working to support families and kids in the province of Ontario to live in the best way, to do the things they like, with the support of the taxpayers. We think their families and all of us collectively contribute to this prosperity. So I hope, after the debate, the opposition party will stand up and support this bill, because it is a great step toward a positive future for our kids in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: The member across the way says that the member from Muskoka doesn't know what he's talking about? Give me a break. He knows more of what's going on over here than your whole caucus over there. Jeez. And you're saying that he doesn't know what

he's talking about? And then you people over there say, "Hope is on the way." That's just like somebody from the Liberal government going up to somebody and saying, "I'm from the Liberal government. I'm going to help you out." Give me a break, because nobody believes that, guys.

This is sort of just one of your little—I don't know what you'd call it. It's trying to make up for all the taxes that you've put on us: the HST, the health tax, everything—you lost \$20 billion last year, and now you've come up with a piddly little thing like this. We've told you that even though it's a piddly little thing, we would support it, yet you want to spend time debating it in here. What you should be spending time debating is where you lost the \$20 billion last year. You should have a whole day or a week to debate that, because you guys turned around and lost \$20 billion, and then you have the gall to say, "Hope is on the way. Hope is on the way."

The hope that's on the way is that there will be an election next fall, and the hope is that you'll be gone. That's what the hope is out there. I mean, gee. Then they stand up and say that our member doesn't know what he's talking about. He knows—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: We've got somebody else talking here. Do you hear that voice? Is that a ghost from up there? I hear a little voice over there, somebody, I'm sure, who will get up and do a two-minute hit. I'm sure that person will because they want us to hear her, and that's fine with me. But I just couldn't sit here and listen to them say, "Hope is on the way." Give us a break, guys. There's no hope with what's going on over there, let me tell you. I say, the only hope is that the election hurries and gets here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to comment on the remarks of my friend from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and certainly to follow the ghost from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, whom it's very nice to see again.

I really take exception to someone denigrating an effort to involve children in extracurricular activities. I know my own parents would have loved to have had such a thing when we were growing up, and we didn't have that. So what's important here is that parents who enrol their children in recreational activities, not just organized sports but music or language or dance, realize that they'll be able to get 10% of that back as a refundable tax credit.

We know what a refundable tax credit is. A refundable tax credit is one that no matter what your income level is, you're going to be refunded that. Even if you otherwise have no room to claim a refund, you'll get the difference. A refundable tax credit is the one to have.

This one, in this respect, is a superior mechanism even to the federal fitness tax credit, which is not refundable and only applies toward income tax owing. This is a refundable one. This comes right back in your wallet, and it happens automatically. If you have five children, then

you can claim this five times. If you have a disabled child, the tax credit is doubled. This is one of the best deals that Ontario has come up with in a long time, and it's really insulting to families, particularly from the 905 area, for the members opposite to simply denigrate it or to write it off.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure to have a couple of minutes here to talk about Bill 99 and to respond to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, as the finance critic for that party. It's my pleasure as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance to work with him. I thank him for his comments, although they were focused more on energy and hydro today. I wanted to bring it back to the children's activity tax credit and the focus that this bill has on children and a healthy childhood and young people, what this bill does for the children of Ontario and how important this refundable tax credit is, up to \$50 for a child to 16 years and \$100 for a child up to 18 years with a disability.

When we're talking about this, we're talking about benefiting up to 1.8 million children in the province of Ontario. That's hugely significant. There are 1.1 million families in Ontario who would agree that every little bit helps in difficult global economic times, that we shouldn't be shutting this down and saying, as the opposition is saying, "We're going to vote for it, but we don't agree with it." Look, these are tough times. Let's work together. Let's think about the people of Ontario. Let's think about the soccer mom.

With my three boys in soccer, I sit on the soccer pitch, and I listen to her tell me that she has four children. She has one child who is my Benjamin's age—12—in soccer. She has three other children. Those children don't want to play soccer. One of the little ones wants to learn piano. The other one is involved in dance and wants to continue in dance. Interestingly enough, her fourth child wants to learn their cultural language, and it's not offered in school. This is a perfect opportunity for this child to learn the language of his culture and his family. This mom is ecstatic. Four children: She'll get a \$50 rebate—\$200. She couldn't be happier. It's the voices of the parents who are saying, "You know what? You are opening the gateway to the future for my children with this bill."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I appreciate the comments from the members from London–Fanshawe, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Mississauga–Streetsville and Kitchener–Conestoga.

Starting off, the member from London–Fanshawe was going through the math. As I pointed out, you spend

\$500 and you'll pay an extra \$40 HST on that \$500. You'll get \$50 back on the first \$500, but if that child happens to be involved in other activities beyond that \$500, which most of them are, you'll just be paying the extra HST.

We're in favour of providing support for Ontario's families. They need it, with all the new taxes that have come into effect.

I'd like to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his supportive comments. He talked a bit about the deficit. Last year, we basically had pretty much \$20 billion of deficit that is going to be new future taxes. Today's deficit is tomorrow's taxes. That's going to be future taxes on those children who are playing the sports right now. For that \$20 billion—the government actually borrowed \$35.2 billion last year. It added \$35.2 billion of new debt that will have to be paid off by future taxes.

Also, thanks to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his comments. I know that he is involved in sports as goalie for the Legiskaters hockey team. He doesn't play very often, mind you. We don't have a very good track record either, actually. I simply would say that Ontario families will need all the help they can get with all the increasing costs here in McGuinty's Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Ms. Wynne has moved third reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will please say "aye."

All opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it. There will be a 30-minute bell.

I have just received a deferral slip to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the third reading vote on Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit, be deferred until Wednesday, November 17." It's signed by the chief government whip.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I declare the motion carried.

The late shows scheduled today are rescheduled for tomorrow.

I therefore declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1736.

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**Legislative Assembly
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de l'Ontario**Deuxième session, 39^e législature**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)****Journal
des débats
(Hansard)****Wednesday 17 November 2010****Mercredi 17 novembre 2010**Speaker
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 novembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 16, 2010, on the motion relating to time allocation on Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to continue the debate; I was looking forward to finishing my time.

I was saying yesterday that I am really a supporter not so much of the bill as of the debate on the bill, because I think it's a good one. I was saying yesterday that "speculation," part of the title given to it, is a big part of this problem. Whether the government addresses it or not is the question. That's why my colleague from Welland said we need full debate in committee, and I'll get to that in the latter part of my comments.

I want to talk about the problem. In my mind, there are two little problems. One little problemo is the issue of affordability. People can barely afford the tickets now.

We're just talking about above board ticket sales in terms of what people now have to pay to get in to see a Raptors game. It's fascinating. I appreciate the fact that my colleague from Welland got these little sheets that show us the kinds of prices people pay. The top price to see a Toronto Raptors game is \$1,120.

Mr. Peter Kormos: How many seats?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How many seats? It's courtside, row A—

Mr. Peter Kormos: One seat.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: One seat. How many seats—

Mr. Peter Kormos: It should buy 20 seats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Welland is saying that for \$1,120, presumably you're going to get a whole row of tickets, right? It's one ticket.

Who has that kind of money except the big shots? These people can afford it. They love to go to the game and just throw their money away. That's part of it. I understand.

At the low end, there are a lot of rows here—Peter, did you see this? There's courtside, row B, \$585; courtside, row C, \$510—affordable, isn't it?—side prime, \$240; side, \$175; baseline prime, \$145; baseline \$110; dynamic side \$80. You get the picture, right? These are very expensive tickets.

We're talking about good working men and women with their children going to watch a game. They have to pay these extraordinarily unaffordable prices. This is on a good day, on a regular day, to go to a game.

Nobody talks about affordability. The government says this bill is about fairness. They didn't talk about the fact that the prices people currently pay to go and see a game are just out of reach for the majority of people who would like to go. But men and women go because, first of all, they like basketball or hockey and, secondly, because their children drive them to the games.

Children are a powerful tool. That's why marketers spend billions and billions of dollars in Canada, the US and Europe—all over the world—to entice young men and women to do things that, under ordinary circumstances, they might not want to do. When you persuade kids that they need to go and see a hockey game, their parents are but puppets to the child's wishes—marketing and marketers are a powerful drive—and they'll go no matter what the price is. But at the moment, prices are unaffordable.

To see Lady Gaga is \$191. There are a lot of people who like Lady Gaga. You look at these people and say, "Good God! Why would you pay that kind of money?" But there are people who love to see these entertainers—God bless—191, 200 bucks a pop. Imagine the allure such people have that they would bring these young women—most of them are young; some are older, but most are young—to pay that kind of money. I'm aghast at this Gaga show. But that's okay. It's entertainment. Unaffordable—200 bucks. People will go because marketing is a powerful tool and they will get there.

I say that the way to get prices down is to boycott these entertainers and the entertainment industry. Boycott the heck out of them until prices go down. We should be picketing from one end of Ontario to the other. If we did that, prices would become affordable. Twenty bucks for Lady Gaga? Okay, 20 bucks is good for me; I might go. Twenty-five bucks? Okay, I might go.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thirty?

0910

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Now we're stretching it, right? But when you get to \$200—people are nuts; people are crazy to be persuaded to go and see these entertainers

for that kind of price. Who else do we have? Oh yes, Justin Bieber. He's a bit cheaper: \$61 Canadian. But he's going to get there. Eventually he's going to get there.

We're talking about prices for concerts or sports being out of reach for the majority of men and women who might want to go and see these people or see these games. The government doesn't deal with that. They will argue, "Well, that's not part of what this bill is about." Okay, what are they dealing with? By the way, the price of concert tickets in the US, as we know, has gone up 61% in the last five years; I just wanted to give that stat as a way of understanding how high prices are going.

The second part of it is that what the government is trying to do is deal with the resale market. Part of the problem was that people were complaining that Ticketmaster was diverting buyers to the TicketsNow site, the resale organization from which they got money. Now, there was a debate last week when we talked in this chamber about whether or not there is collusion, and people got really nervous with the word "collusion." I said that I thought there is collusion. But even if there wasn't collusion, is there a related connection of the two? If you direct tickets to another organization that resells them and you get some money back, are they related? You bet your boots they are. Is it collusion? Let's leave it for the lawyers to decide. These are terms that are complex and legal in nature. We'll leave it to them to decide. But are the two of them related? Absolutely.

This bill attempts to deal with that. Okay. Does it solve it? The problem is, it doesn't. Why? Because you've got brokers in Toronto and outside of Toronto who use the computer system to access as many tickets as they want, pick them up and resell them. Does the bill deal with that?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Jeff from Peterborough, it doesn't deal with that. That's what my friend from Welland is saying. We need hearings and we need lots of them. We need to bring people to talk about how we can make this bill better. And what does the government do? It gives two little days, a couple of hours on each, to bring people to committee to discuss this, in my mind, very important bill.

I know that some of my Conservative friends—brothers and sisters—said, "This is a useless bill. Move on. There are more important things." This is an important bill to debate. This is an issue of affordability. This is an issue of ordinary folks—men and women—who want to go to sports events, who want to go to concerts and can't afford it, and then are subject to the resale market, the uncontrollable avarice of resale marketeers, brokers who fleece those who are willing to fork out the money.

Mr. John O'Toole: Rosario, you're going over the top.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Member from Durham, no, no. We're not. We're talking about people from Oshawa—your people—who like to go to these concerts and sports activities, and you're telling them that this bill is useless? No. This bill can be useful if we make it so.

That's why we need to embarrass the government, not so much because they're curtailing debate on this bill today but because they're curtailing the number of days they're giving so that people can come and speak to this bill. A couple of hours on two days is all you're giving. That is the shameful nature of the debate today, not so much that your bill doesn't do as much but what it could do if you allowed it to do the proper job. How could you shamefully accept your House leader or the Premier's—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Rosie, it hurts.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, that was introduced by you, mon amie—perhaps directed by a stronger hand; I'm not sure—to limit the number of days that we would be able to invite people and allow them the opportunity to speak to this bill and allow them the opportunity to recommend amendments that could make this bill a little better. How could you be so happy to do so little each and every time that you're given this opportunity? How could you be so happy with so little? That's the Liberal way. It's amazing.

I think we've had enough on this bill for the day. I'm not sure we have been able to embarrass the government around the issue of curtailment of hearings, but we've done our best, those of us who have spoken to this bill, and I suppose it's time to move on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

In that case, Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 33. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to standing order 9(c), the vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 28, 2010, on the amendment to the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Nearly two months ago, I was standing here talking about this motion, put forward by the honourable minister, relating to immigration and immigration levels, seeking funds for the province of Ontario. The government has seen fit, after more than two months—and that was the first day of debate—to bring the matter back. I'm wondering why. I am absolutely flabbergasted, if it was so important two months ago that this motion be passed in terms of the ongoing dialogue with the federal government, that it's taken two months to bring it back. Notwithstanding that, I still have 41 minutes left on my speech, and I intend to use them today.

On the last occasion, I had an opportunity to outline the abysmal failure of the Ontario government, this one for the past seven years, and governments before which have chosen to do absolutely nothing within their mandate around the issues of immigration.

In 1978, as I outlined on the last occasion, the government of Quebec sat down and negotiated An Act respecting immigration to Quebec—as I outlined the last time, the British North America Act gives all provinces that right; in fact, every province has a Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, just as the federal government has a Minister of Citizenship and Immigration—and it is one of only two joint jurisdictions, as set out in the British North America Act, 1867.

Quebec has seen fit to do the wise, just and honourable thing with their immigrants, and Ontario, which has taken the lion's share of immigrants over all of those years, has chosen to do absolutely nothing except go, cap in hand, once in awhile, as this motion is saying, to say, "Please, sir, give us some money so we can deal with the flood of immigrants who come to Ontario every year. But, no, no, we don't want to help choose them. We don't want to help them integrate in any real, meaningful way like Quebec does. We don't want to have our own grid system to choose the immigrants who are best for Ontario. We don't want to do all the things that Quebec does and expects to do."

That's what I talked about the last time. I encourage anyone who wants to see that to go back and look at the transcript of September 28.

In reality, what this minister is asking for is not enough. Surely, in this time of economic turmoil, we have to do more with the skills and abilities we have.

0920

In the interim, in those two months that I waited to finish this speech, the government, to no fanfare at all and in a foreign place, announced that they were going to give some \$30 million to bring 75 foreign students, the best and the brightest, here to Ontario. I don't really have too much umbrage with that. I know that there have been some tough questions in this House. But you know, what about the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who have come to this province in the last number of years who already are the best and the brightest, who have already come with amazing credentials—doctors and lawyers and nuclear scientists and all those people who are out there driving cabs? What is this government doing about that? The best and the brightest we already have here, we're not helping them nearly enough to get into the regulated professions.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, listen to this. I hear the catcalls coming from the other side already, pretending that they actually care and that they've actually done something in the last seven years.

Let's just talk about immigration. Let's talk about where immigrants come to in this country. Forty-four per cent of all the immigrants who come to this country come to the province of Ontario. Now, that is down. It used to

be more than 50%; it used to be 55% only a decade ago. But they are finding that the opportunities that this government is offering are not contingent with their expectation, and they're choosing to go elsewhere, where governments have been more successful in integrating them into the mainstream and where they have a better opportunity to use the skills and abilities that they have. In fact, the number of immigrants who come to Ontario and to Canada—slightly more than 50% of all the immigrants who have been chosen in the last number of years have at least some university and/or a university degree. Are we maximizing the potential with them? I think not, because we have not helped them and we have not been there to assist them in making the application or in understanding how those skills and abilities might be used here in Ontario.

Some 79.2% of all the immigrants who come to Ontario come to the Toronto census management area. That's the GTA, by and large, for most people's understanding—79.2%. In fact, within the city of Toronto, the number of foreign-born people will exceed the number of Canadian-born people within the next census year. So more people live here today in the city of Toronto who were born elsewhere than who were actually born here in Canada. I think this has been a magnet, and those people have come with great expectations.

As I said on the last occasion, I worked for the immigration department for 21 years. I worked at places like Pearson International Airport, at border crossings, and I helped to process people when they mostly got off planes, sometimes out of cars or buses. When they came to this country with the piece of paper in their hand, a landing document to become a permanent resident, you could see in their eyes the expectation that they had for this wonderful land, the hope that they had, if not for themselves then at least for their children.

So many of them, when I go out to groups around Toronto today—and I had an opportunity to have dinner with the Ethiopian community last week, and with the Pakistani community, and I'm going out for some more this week, as I'm sure all members do in Ontario; we all do that. Look at the hope in their eyes and talk to them. I talk to Bangladeshis who have come here with incredibly good degrees as accountants and they are not recognized in their chosen field. Canada and Ontario have agreements to recognize the education from Pakistan.

Pakistan and Bangladesh used to be one country. I know that they were cut in half, or bifurcated, by India, but they used to be east Pakistan and west Pakistan. Then, when the Bangladeshis broke away over the mother languages issue and formed their own country—Canada and Ontario do not recognize the credentials of east Pakistan; they recognize the credentials of west Pakistan. So all those professional accountants and bookkeepers who have come here hoping to be able to use their credentials can't use them here.

What has this government done in terms of negotiating or talking with them while they were making application to come to Canada? And we do need accountants, we do

need actuaries, we do need people who are good with books and who are bookkeepers. What have they done to tell them when they come here that we won't recognize their credentials?

I wonder, if we had done the right thing, as I explained that the province of Quebec has done, then we could have chosen them. We could have told them at the time of their application that they would either need to have upgrading or that they couldn't use their skills, and those people could have made a wise and just decision for themselves and their families as to whether to come here in the first place. Because it is better, I would suggest, that new immigrants who have skills and abilities which are marketable at home—they may want to stay there. It is probably doing their countries a far better duty and a far better humanitarian effort if they are a doctor in a place like, I don't know—I'll pick Burundi again because it's far-flung and we don't have many Burundian immigrants. It's better to leave a doctor there who is a doctor and who can assist the people in that land than to bring them here where they can't practise and do what they know how to do. It is only logical. And if the province was there—if the province who holds all the keys to the regulatory nature, who holds all the keys to whether or not those skills are going to be recognized in any of the major professions tells them that this is not going to fly in Ontario, then I think people will make a very wise decision.

The federal government says, "You're a doctor. We need doctors." They can't say where the person is going to go, where they're going to come, what province they're going to end up in, because there's no law to that. But Quebec has solved that problem, and I think that we need to do something. We need to make sure that the 50% of all immigrants who come to this country with university training and/or skills are looked after.

Because you see, what's happening in Ontario is that those very skilled immigrants in the regulated professions are starting to choose not to come to Ontario. They're choosing not to come to this province. In 2004, regulated professionals made up 12.1% of all the immigrants who came to Ontario. By 2008, five years into this government's first mandate, and into the second one, that number was down to 8.3%. I would suggest that when the next census figures come out, it's going to be lower than that still, because what is happening is the word goes back: In Ontario, we don't help. In Ontario, we don't regulate. In Ontario, we don't inform in advance. It's not going to work. They're not going to want to come here and they're not going to build Ontario.

As I said, the government chose to give \$30 million for the best and brightest to go to school. Would that they would give \$30 million for the best and brightest who are already here to be upgraded, to use those skills that they had at home and that they need to use here.

The government is also failing on another front. Again, I go back to if we had our own system like Quebec, we could act in a much more humane, much more balanced way.

In 2008, the number of temporary residents in Ontario was 240,264. That is 40.8% of all temporary residents in Canada. Temporary residents are people like students, foreign workers, humanitarian entrants and temporary residents who are here for some special purpose, sometimes for medical treatment or for many other things—religious purposes. There are 240,000 people.

Let's put into perspective how much that is. A pretty large percentage of all of the people who are living in Ontario today have a defined status which does not permit them to participate in Canadian life. They all have a number 9 on their SIN card at the front which, in the majority of cases, will not allow them to work, or will allow them to work under very restricted conditions. They do not have the opportunity, unless they are students, to attend schools, although the children of temporary workers, I want to say, do, and I think that's an enlightened aspect of most of the school boards here in Ontario. If they are students, they cannot work except under prescribed circumstances. If they are here on humanitarian entrance, that's difficult as well.

0930

The figures for those are pretty revealing as well. In Ontario, 38% of those 240,000 people who are here with limited status are foreign workers. Many of them work on our farms. I know we have had many discussions in this House, certainly from the members who represent ridings that are more rural in nature than mine of Beaches—East York, about those temporary farm workers. They often work in horrendous conditions. They work without safety protocols that most of us would consider quite normal. There were a couple of deaths just a few months ago. Two farm workers were killed on the job. It continues to be one of the most dangerous occupations in all of Canada, to work on farms, particularly for foreign farm workers, who are expected to do a lot of the grunt and heavy work. They are literally here without protection.

Here in Ontario, we don't have any say in bringing them in; we let the federal government bring them in. At the end of the year, most fly home or go back to wherever and wait for the next growing season. Very few of them stay here for longer than six or eight months at a time. While they're here, we do not provide them a whole lot of protection. Most of them make minimum wage for backbreaking, horrible work, and they're not allowed to unionize. Oh, my goodness. This government—horror of horrors—would never let those farm workers have any kind of union that could protect them, in terms of health and safety regulations or trying to get one cent more than the \$10.25 minimum wage that's out there. Horror of horrors, no. They can't do that. That would be the death of the agri-farm.

We do nothing on that. We, in this Legislature—although there are some who advocate for it, like me and members of my party, this government does nothing on that. Because they did not help to choose to bring them in, they wash their hands; it's a federal responsibility.

They do nothing on foreign students. They are out there marketing to foreign students so the foreign stu-

dents can come and pay the full cost of university and college education in Ontario. This government does little to regulate all of it or to provide services to people, many of whom are here for a short period of time and are expected to return. That's the reality here in Ontario.

We have no say whatsoever because we have no protocol. We have no law such as the province of Quebec has signed.

The minister, of course, has said that he wants "to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper." But he doesn't want to follow the logical steps. He doesn't want to take any responsibility. The amendment to this motion put forward by my colleagues in the official opposition demands some kind of protocol. It's no wonder that the federal government has been reluctant in the past to give money *holus-bolus* to the Ontario Legislature, and particularly to this government: because they have no plan. They want the \$207 million, but they're not willing to take any responsibility or outline how that money is going to be spent. I agree with the amendment. I think that has to be done.

The first way that has to be done is for the government to recognize that they have a responsibility, not only to the immigrants but also to those people who have temporary status in Ontario. The number of temporary workers arriving to Ontario in 2008 was 66,634, 3.5 times the number of skilled-worker, principal-applicant, permanent residents arriving that year, which was 18,757. The government in Ontario is making a calculated decision. They talk about helping and needing immigrants and take 18,000 skilled immigrants, but on the q.t., they're more than happy to let people in here with temporary status, who have no long-term stake in the community; who likely, at the end of each and every term of six or eight months, have to go back from whence they came. Then the government washes its hands, but they still want \$207 million to do absolutely nothing. Ontario is actively increasing the number of foreign workers, but there are no protections, as I said, for these workers.

I want to talk about getting your professional licence in Ontario, the experience of international and Canadian applicants and the 2010 Fairness Commissioner's report. Now, I have railed on for a few minutes here about people driving cabs or delivering pizza. The tales are anecdotal, but they're legendary. If you live in the city of Toronto particularly, where the bulk of immigrants are, in the Toronto CMA, you will have all heard those. You will all have met people who do this. But the Fairness Commissioner drew the following conclusions.

First, generally, there appears to be adequate information about the licensing process available from multiple sources. However, it is not always clear to applicants how to access this information and whether it is reliable, and that is particularly the case at the visa office when they're first arriving. That is particularly the case at the airport, if they were to fly into Toronto.

The Ontario government, years and years ago, when I first started with the immigration department at Pearson airport—it was then called Toronto International Airport—had a presence. There was an Ontario immigration welcome service that sat down and talked with every new immigrant who arrived at that airport after the federal immigration officers, of which I was one in the early 1970s, processed the person to landing, filled out the documents and had the forms signed so they could get social insurance numbers and the like. We sent them to Ontario Welcome House and the Ontario Welcome House reception people who worked at the airport.

They, in turn, were responsible for a great many things: making sure that the new immigrants had somewhere to go, a hotel or somewhere, if they were coming and family wasn't waiting for them; making sure that they understood the laws of Ontario as they related to minimum wage and everything else, so they wouldn't be subject to something bad happening to them in the immediate future; making sure that they had the address of Ontario Welcome House, which was on University Avenue in those days, in Toronto, so that if they required any additional information they could freely access it. This was in the days before computers, so you had to come down and talk to an actual official—making sure that the social insurance number applications and other things were properly filled out; making sure that people knew where to take their credentials for translation; and everything else. In the austerity that happened in the years following that, that service was cut. Ontario walked away from its immigrants. Ontario walked away to save a few dollars and didn't do what was necessary. When Quebec, in 1978, decided to get back into this game in a big way, it was one of the first things they restored.

So, there is information, but there's no way people know how to access it or how reliable it is.

The second thing the Fairness Commissioner talked about is that internationally trained participants experience more difficulty finding information about licensing requirements than do the domestically trained. Now, this is not that difficult to believe. I mean, surely it's true: If somebody has lived in a place for a long time, you generally know where to access things. Think about any of us moving to a new town. You move to a new town and you start to get lost on the streets. You don't know where the supermarket is. You don't have a doctor. Where's the post office, where's the community centre? You don't know that stuff. It takes a while, even for someone born here who is moving to a new town or city, to find that out. The same is true and is expanded many times for those who are coming from a new country, especially if they're coming to a large place like Toronto, which is very difficult for people to fathom: how to get around on the subway, how to locate all the services, what services are available, what things to expect, what things not to.

That's something that a place like Ontario Welcome House could have done, but this government chooses not to do that anymore. They choose to not be in the immi-

gration game, other than to take the \$207 million that the minister insists on getting.

0940

The Fairness Commissioner said, "Internationally educated individuals get mixed messages from different levels of government. (An immigrant professional earns points for education and work experience when he or she applies to become a permanent resident of Canada, but faces licensing challenges once here.)" I've already talked about that but I just want to reiterate that it's not just me saying this. The Fairness Commissioner, appointed by this Legislature, says exactly the same thing.

Here it is. Here's our grid system: You need 65 points to make it to Canada. You're an engineer with a university degree. Well, there's 20 points right off the bat. They don't tell you that the difficulty you're going to face getting licensed is sometimes insurmountable.

I don't want to pick on engineers, but I do have the opportunity, from time to time, to go down to the engineers when they are helping engineers from other countries become accredited here. There is a ceremony once a year, which I have now attended twice, which is a very moving ceremony. You see people from literally all over the world who are sitting there who have finally been recognized for their qualifications. The engineers, I think, are doing a pretty good job in terms of trying to get those people accredited. Would that all the other professions were doing the same good job.

But having said that, the Fairness Commissioner is right. When they apply to become a permanent resident they get a whole bunch of points, but they face licensing challenges once here.

If we had our own grid system, if we had our own visa officers like Quebec does, then we could explain to the majority of people who are coming to Canada and who are coming to Toronto or to Ontario what they could expect. Surely that's the least we could do for prospective new citizens who we expect and know will contribute so much to this province.

She went on to state, "Internationally trained applicants need to be better informed, prior to arriving in Canada, about the importance of having all their required documents."

Well, of course. The federal visa office doesn't know where they're going to go. They don't know whether they're going to go to Prince Edward Island or to Quebec—no, they know if they're going to Quebec because the visa officer will tell them that right on the spot. They don't know if they're going to go to British Columbia or Alberta, so they can't say what documents are important. But if we had somebody there, if we spent the money wisely, they would know, and they would come with it.

The Fairness Commissioner writes, "The length, complexity and cost of licensing processes are frustrating for both Canadian-trained and internationally trained individuals." I think I need not comment. That's true.

"Financial support in the form of government grants or loans to pay for education appears to be more accessible

by domestically trained than by internationally trained candidates." That's absolutely true as well.

What is this government doing about that? I ask you, what is this government doing to close that gap? I've said that I have no umbrage against spending \$30 million to bring the best and the brightest. But what about the ones who come with the qualifications already done? Why aren't we spending money on them? They are the best and the brightest as well. That's why we're choosing them. That's why Canada is choosing them. That's why Ontario wants them here. What are we doing for them? Unfortunately, not near enough.

She goes on to write, "Internationally trained applicants appear to be less prepared for examinations than those educated in Canada."

That is true. One might expect that. The formats are different. What is taught in the schools may be different. Ours may be outdated or theirs may be outdated, depending on where they are coming from, in terms of the expertise. In the end, I would imagine, even if they were in English, I would have difficulty passing examinations from New Zealand or Australia on the first crack as well, whatever the qualification was, because you simply don't know what was taught and how to write it. That's the reality.

She writes, "The requirement of some regulatory bodies for Canadian work experience is perceived as a particularly difficult challenge by internationally trained applicants." I think, too, the government has a responsibility, if not within the immigration system then at least by some order-in-council regulation that says that this is not a legal requirement, that firms ought not to be allowed to do this. "Do you have experience?" "Yes." "Give me the names of places that you worked that gave you that experience," and if you list Glasgow or if you list Paris or if you list Kuala Lumpur, then that's what you list. There ought not to be any requirement that that experience be gained in Canada, but simply that you have that experience. And she went on to write some other things.

That's where I think this government is missing the boat. I have heard nothing discussed by the minister or the parliamentary assistant to date that would tell me that this government wants to move on anything except getting the \$207 million. As I said the last time, the law in Canada, section 8 of the Immigration Act of Canada, requires that there be ongoing consultation between the federal and provincial governments, because this is one of two joint jurisdictions. It happens each and every year between this province and the federal government: There is some level of negotiation or discussion about immigration levels, about who is coming, changes to the act. That needs to continue, that's what the law is, but really, for Ontario to be in the game we've got to do more than we've done in the past.

I'd like to talk about immigration to Ontario in terms of the colour of poverty, because I think this is a very gnawing detail. For Hansard, that's "gn," gnawing. It's a very gnawing detail. Although I think we as Ontarians

should be very proud of the integration of new people from many lands with many religions, with many dialects, with many languages, with many cultures, it is a reality in this province that if you are poor, chances are you are a woman; if you are poor, the chances are that you are a person of colour; if you are poor, the chances are that you are a person who is a new immigrant or a First Nations Canadian. The last one, a very important one, is that you have some kind of disability. Those are our poor. That is absolutely the truth. Between 1981 and 2001, the number of immigrants who are poor in Toronto—largely people of colour—grew by 125%. We bring people to this country and to this province and the reality is that when they get here, they're poor. We have seen the reality of that poverty in many places.

In Toronto, the city of Toronto, to its credit, and the United Way of Toronto, to its credit, came out with Poverty by Postal Code, and they highlighted 13 key communities where new immigrants, people of colour, were coming and where there was poverty, and it was endemic; it was there; it was in your face; it didn't seem to go away, despite waves of immigrants coming from different places all the time. One of those places is in my riding; it's called Crescent Town. It's a wonderful high-rise community of about 15,000 people, almost all of whom come from somewhere in South Asia. They come from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka; that's where the majority of them are from. The poverty there is gut-wrenching. These are hard-working people. These are people who don't ask for welfare. These are people who have minimum-wage jobs. These are people who care very much for their families. But they are poor. I think that we have failed them. We have failed them in the whole immigration experiment by not giving the necessary tools when they applied and by not giving the necessary tools when they arrived. They had to learn—and learn the hard way—how to acculturate themselves, how to find out things.

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Slowly but surely, as they become established, they're getting better at it. Slowly but surely, you're starting to see immigrant aid self-help groups being set up by these various communities where they speak the language and know the culture, but the funds flowing to them have been few and far between.

I would hope that if this government is successful in negotiating \$207 million, they will look very carefully and clearly that this is one of the key places where that money should be spent. It is only through that education, through that interaction with immigrants who have been here before, that something can be done.

I'd also like to talk about licensing. This is a key aspect where this government has been missing in action throughout the entire time, and that is licensing not for new immigrants but for immigration consultants.

When I worked in the immigration department, we didn't think there was any lower form of life than immigration consultants. These were people with absolutely no credentials or training—in those days; I'm going to

get into the modern one—who would hang around taking advantage of people who came from their culture or from their country or who spoke their language.

You would have consultants who spoke many of the Indian languages, who would deal with the Indian community. You would have consultants who were from Jamaica or the Caribbean, who would deal with the Caribbean community. You would have consultants who spoke Portuguese, who would deal with the Portuguese and the Azorean communities. You would have those who spoke Spanish deal with Spanish-speaking communities.

The only key was that they were immigrants themselves a few years before, had figured out what was happening out there and would say, "I can help you to stay in Canada; I can help you with your immigration application; I can help you to bring your relatives," and they would charge exorbitant amounts of money to do almost nothing. They would get them to make claims of refugee status that were spurious and bogus. I can't tell you how many times I had to listen to Portuguese refugee claimants who claimed to be Jehovah's Witnesses. We had more than 10,000 applications in Toronto alone. The entire Jehovah's Witness church in Portugal only had 183 adherents, all of whom were in Portugal and were not being persecuted.

This is the kind of stuff, and it was because of these bogus refugee self-help people, who were charging tens of thousands of dollars to assist people in making bogus claims and in doing things that were clearly contrary to the best interests of this country and of this province.

We have failed to license them properly in the past. We have moved down that road a little bit, because now there is a society of professional immigration consultants. These are people who have been trained, some of whom are former immigration staff or have met the minimum standards set up by that society.

I have to say that there is some aspect to this that is good. But I continue to read—and we all continue to read in the paper each and every day—about these consultants and how they're ripping people off, how they're making them say things and do things that aren't legitimate or logical.

On the last occasion, I talked about a man who was in my office from India. He came here and was working very hard for a company and was being paid \$100,000 a year. He was an excellent employee and the company desperately wanted to keep him here. He went to an immigration consultant, who told him to make a claim for refugee status from India.

He was crying in my office because he had been duped. He was a man who earned \$100,000 a year, who spoke impeccable English and who was university-trained. He was duped that that was the only way he could stay in this country, and he made a claim. He was crying in my office because not only had he spent tens of thousands of dollars making a claim that was going nowhere, but he admitted freely to me that he was unaware how any person from India, the world's largest democ-

racy, could be a refugee from that country. He had made the claim upon that advice and had found himself being forced out of Canada and perhaps not ever being allowed back in, because if you get deported you might never get back in. The company was desperately trying to keep him here because he was key to their economic survival and he was key to about 20 other workers who relied on his expertise to keep their jobs as well.

That's the kind of thing that we need to move on. That's the kind of thing that this government needs to do in terms of licensing of immigration consultants. I bring up his story as only one of many thousands. I'm sure there are thousands of people like him, people who want to stay here and want to contribute and go out there who find these unscrupulous consultants who give them bogus and bad advice.

In the end, he found a legitimate lawyer who was trying to repair as much of the damage as he could. In fact, the man would have qualified to remain in Canada as a person who was going to bring economic benefit to this country. In fact, that's who he was. Had he made that application through a legitimate lawyer or somebody who knew what they were doing instead of making a stupid allegation of torture in India, then I'm sure he would have had much more success.

I think this government needs to move on that front too, and I haven't heard anything from the minister, in terms of his \$207-million request, on whether he wants to do that. I think we all need to hear that. That's why I'm looking forward to the ongoing nature of this debate: to see what other people opposite are going to say about immigration, because it is key to this province.

It is key to our survival, in terms of our manufacturing, industrial, commercial and intellectual base, that we get and keep the best and the brightest. If we are going to bring those people from around the world, then we have to treat them right. We can't put them at the mercy of unscrupulous immigration consultants. We can't put them at the mercy of a system to let them fend for themselves and try to determine what documents and education are necessary to get the kind of job that they are capable of and aspire to. We can't put them at that mercy. We can't put them at the mercy of going into the visa office and being chosen randomly to go across Canada, and then they choose to come to Ontario where their skills may not be needed and where they may face unemployment. We can't bring them to Canada and have them go into poverty, into all of those places where people of colour are increasingly living in poverty and where it's going up by 125%.

We have an obligation in Ontario to do the right thing, and the right thing is for us to be in the immigration game. If Quebec can do it, then we can do it. If this minister wants \$207 million, we want to know where that money is going to be spent and how it is going to help immigrants. I would suggest the key way is for us to sit down and to negotiate with the government of Canada to be a part of the immigration system: to choose them in the first place and to have all the rules and regulations set

out in law, not just in policy or some memorandum of understanding, but set out in law what this province will do to help, what this province will do to prosecute people who are illegally acting under the immigration acts, what this province will do in terms of acculturation of new citizens and what this province will do in order to make sure that everybody lives up to his or her full potential.

I am going to vote for the amendment that is put forward by the opposition because I think it's a good amendment. I think it strengthens what the minister is going to do. In spite of the criticism in what I've had to say, this causes no harm, and I'm likely to vote for the motion as well. But what I want the government to do is not to think in small terms like asking for \$207 million but to actually seize in their hands the opportunity that is going to benefit this province and the people of this province for generations to come, and that is to do what Quebec has done: write our own act, enforce our own rules and choose our own immigrants, to the benefit of all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was delighted to listen to the member from Beaches–East York for almost 41 minutes speaking about immigration. There's no doubt in my mind he has a lot of experience in this regard.

I want to say that the intent and the aim and the goal of the motion is to get support from both sides of the House, support from the Conservatives and the NDP and, of course, the government, to create a force to convince the federal government to live up to its obligations and duty.

I listened to the member from Beaches–East York talking about negotiations with the federal government, and there's no agreement in place. The minister, the Honourable Dr. Hoskins, spoke about this in detail when he introduced the motion quite some time ago.

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I want to remind everyone about the agreement between the province and the federal government. The Canada-Ontario immigration agreement was signed on November 21, 2005, and provided \$920 million in new federal funding for settlement services over the five-year period, in addition to \$540 million in base funding. A one-year extension to the agreement was announced on May 5, 2010, which commits an additional \$428 million for 2010-11. So what happened? We received \$713 million. If you make the calculations, we are short \$207 million.

As the minister mentioned over and over, we are the home of immigrants in this nation. Almost 100,000 people come to this province on a yearly basis, and most of those people come to this province because they see hope and a future for themselves and their family to be prosperous, live in comfort, be able to accredit themselves, find a job in their professions and raise their family in the best way possible.

What we are doing in the province of Ontario is we're trying to convince the federal government to work to be a true partner in order to give us the chance to support

many immigrants who come to the province of Ontario. If you compare us to Manitoba, British Columbia or Quebec, for instance, they get almost 1.5 times more support than the province of Ontario gets from the federal government to support an immigrant.

Also, in terms of supporting immigrants, since we got elected, we created so many different initiatives to accommodate many immigrants who come to the province of Ontario. Lately, we launched a bridge program in almost 200 locations across the province of Ontario to allow many immigrants to fit in and integrate in the province of Ontario. From the 100,000 immigrants who come on a yearly basis, we're able, through those bridge programs, to give a chance to 40,000 new immigrants to work in their professions and also help themselves and help their families.

Not a long time ago, I had the chance and the privilege to announce a program in conjunction with Fanshawe College in London to help nurses update their skills and their ability to be accredited in the province of Ontario.

Those initiatives are important for immigrants and important for all of us in the province of Ontario, because we believe strongly that our future depends on newcomers and depends on the brightest people who come from different parts of the globe. They come to the province of Ontario to share their wealth with us and to help us maintain our prosperity, and also to give us the ability to continue progress in the province of Ontario.

Therefore, we call on the federal government to give back to the province of Ontario \$207 million. That \$207 million, as the member from Beaches–East York outlined, is important to us to fund and support many different programs across the province of Ontario to help newcomers to come.

I want to give you a life story from my riding of London–Fanshawe. A lady named Mona came to Canada almost four years ago. She came, and she was lucky enough that when she immigrated to the province of Ontario, she got a job. After four years, she became a Canadian citizen. That person, for some reason, lost her job. Due to the economic circumstances in the region, she lost her job; she found herself without a job. She thought about the best way for her to update her skills to be able to find a different job. Therefore, she was looking for a way to learn more English to upgrade her skills. She found out that because she's a Canadian citizen, she cannot enrol in the federal program.

Another example: Two people want to come from Central America. Samuel and Ramona want to come to London, and they start navigating the system. As you know, we have a portal. In many different cities in the province of Ontario, you can go online and check what's available for you when you come to the province of Ontario, when you come to Canada. They were confused because there are so many different programs. There's lots of duplications of programs from the federal and the provincial government.

Also, another person who wants to come—her name is Sheri—came to London, too. She came from England.

She was looking at how to find a job in the province of Ontario. She was navigating the system. She went to the employment centre to see how she could accredit herself to be able to find a job in Ontario, and she also went to the provincial side. She didn't know what to do. She thought she was wasting her time because she went first to the federal government and was asked to go to the province.

So, this is what we're asking; this is what our Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is asking the House in this place: asking the federal government to work on a partnership with the province of Ontario in order to create a special mechanism that can help people who want to come to Ontario and to Canada. That's what we are asking for. We're not just asking for the money; we're asking about partnership. We're asking the federal government to allow us to administer those programs in the province of Ontario and to have one program instead of two programs, one federal, one provincial, doing the same things. It's confusing for people who want to come from different parts of the globe. It's confusing for us as a community. It's a waste of time for us and for the immigrants who want to come, and also it's a waste of resources.

As we talk about a strategy—and I listened to the member from Beaches–East York talking about many different elements. He mentioned immigration, consulting, many different things, and he knows—and he is the first one who should know—that those elements are controlled by the federal government, not by the province of Ontario. The licence for consultants is 100% run and controlled by the federal government. Do you know what? Sometimes people go to seek advice from a lawyer and the lawyer gives them bad advice, too. It's a complex issue.

He is talking about there not being enough programs across Ontario to help newcomers. That's not correct. I came from the city of London, and we have three wonderful organizations: the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre, the WIL employment centre and LUSO. They work on a regular basis with newcomers to help them navigate the system, help them go to school, get accreditations for their education; how to deal, on a daily basis, in the community; how they can navigate the system on some very important issues.

Also, in terms of foreign-trained international credentials, I know it's a very complex issue. I have been in that ministry for almost seven years. We've done a lot, but we don't say we've done everything or that we can celebrate success yet, because we have a lot of steps ahead of us to try to find the best way to accommodate, accredit and integrate people who come from different parts of the globe. I still remember when we passed Bill 124, access for foreign-trained international people who want to come to Ontario to be accredited. We worked with all the regulatory bodies; for instance, the engineers, who have been referenced many times in the House. The engineers were the best group we worked with. They were accommodating for many people. They tried their best to have a

system to help all newcomers, especially with engineering degrees, to fit and integrate into the province of Ontario.

But we have a problem. As the member mentioned, when you apply to Canada from different parts of the globe, you apply to come to Canada and say, "I want to come to Ontario." Every year, we welcome almost 15,000 engineers to Ontario, and we graduate, from our schools in the province, 5,000. If you add them up, it will be 20,000 engineers that we have in Ontario. Are we able to accommodate all these people? Technically, for 13 million people, for the capacity we have, it would be impossible. But the engineering regulating body works with us very well. They do their best to give the education they need. They give whatever possible things they have to allow all the engineers to fit in, integrate and accredit in Ontario; to give them an equal chance and footing to compete for jobs in Ontario.

And accountants: They're also great organizations. We've worked with them very well in the past and will continue to work with them in the future to accommodate all the accountants from every different part of the globe. But, as you know and as has been mentioned, every nation has a different curriculum. Every nation has different programs, different strategies and different kinds of education. Therefore, we have to put in place a mechanism, which has been done by the accountants, to accredit the many different people who want to come and be accountants in the province of Ontario.

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I say it's a difficult issue, because we welcome people on a regular basis, on a yearly basis, from 170 nations; we welcome people from 170 nations. Almost 250,000 people come to Canada, and 100,000 come to Ontario. For those 100,000 people, those people have education from various different universities across the planet—many, many. Some of them are accredited by UNESCO, accredited by WES, the World Education Services body, and some of them are not. It's very complex to navigate every university to see which one is okay and which one does not fit and is not being compatible with our system in the province of Ontario. So that's why there's complexity there.

It is very important for us, as the minister outlined over and over, to get the support from the federal government. The \$207 million will give us a chance to help many thousands and thousands of people from different backgrounds to be able to study, to accredit themselves and to be able to work in the province of Ontario.

We've been working with accreditation departments. We've been working with many different regulatory bodies in the province of Ontario to find a way to help the newcomers to fit, to integrate and to be accredited. That's why we established the Office of the Fairness Commissioner. The Fairness Commissioner is there to oversee the conduct of regulatory bodies in the province of Ontario, because, as you know, so many regulatory bodies—as I mentioned, so many people graduated from different colleges, from different universities, so it is

difficult and complex. But that regulatory body does its best, in conjunction with the Fairness Commissioner, in conjunction with our government, with various departments in our government, to see the best way that we can accommodate and integrate people who want to come to Ontario.

We pay a lot of attention to this area because the future is built on immigrants. It's a nation and a province built by immigrants. Therefore, I think, for our own interests and for the sake of the prosperity of the province of Ontario, we want every immigrant to be successful. We want every person in this province to be successful, because the only way we can be prosperous in the future, the only way Canada can be prosperous—if Ontario is doing good, Canada will do good. That's why we continue working with all the agencies, groups and organizations across the province of Ontario, which are supported heavily by our ministry and also by our government: in order to create and facilitate the integration for many immigrants who want to come to the province of Ontario.

I know we take blame sometimes for a lot of things, and the member opposite mentioned a lot of things which are out of our jurisdiction; it's a part of the federal government's. That's what we want to do: We want to convince the federal government to continue working with us as a partner to find a way to accommodate newcomers who want to come to the province of Ontario. I strongly hope that both sides of the House come to an agreement and support this motion in order to convince the federal government to live up to its agreement, which has been signed many different years, and also give us the financial support to be able to support those programs across the province of Ontario.

It's difficult and important at the same time for all of us, especially the accreditations. We hear a lot about it. People who have certain credentials are driving taxis and delivering pizza—many different stories on the street.

As you know, the government does not find jobs for people, but the government creates an opportunity for people to find a job. That's what we do in the province of Ontario. We create the conditions and an environment for the people to find their job, and we create an environment and conditions for the immigrants, when they come to Canada, to find their way in the province of Ontario—to go to school, to learn English as a second language, or French, or, also, to go to an organization like the a cross-cultural learning centre or LUSO, an employment centre, to help them navigate the system and find good jobs that suit their credentials and their skills.

As I've mentioned, over the years, from 100,000, due to our investments in many groups, organizations and settlement programs across the province of Ontario, we were able to help 40,000—that's a huge number—through the bridge program, which we implemented across the province to help those people to upgrade their skills and their language to find a job they like or that suits their credentials.

The issue here, as the minister outlined, is not just about money. It's about partnership. It's about the ability

for us to administrate the settlement and program in the province of Ontario. It's about eliminating the duplications in the program in Ontario. It's about newcomers finding their way and being able to settle in the province. It's about our ability to allow and select some people to come to Ontario. We have been given almost 1,000 now from the provincial government under the PNP program to select some students and intellectuals and people with high skills to live in the province of Ontario. But those programs are being well supported by the federal government. People apply and wait and wait, and still they lost work, and you know permission is in the hands of the federal government.

So we want to select people. We want to also have the ability to administrate the program in the province. We want to also work with the federal government in order to select the best of the best to come to Ontario. We want to also have the ability to help the newcomers to fit and integrate and be able to provide for themselves and their families, and also for the province of Ontario, for the great nation of Canada. That's what we are working on, so that's not about money only; it's about administration, about ability to be a full partner with the federal government.

I wish I had more time to speak about this issue, because this issue is important to me and to many, many people who live in Ontario, and also those who want to come to the great province of Ontario.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I take great pleasure in introducing Mr. Larry Molyneaux, president of the PAO, Ron Middel, CAO of the PAO, and Karl Walsh, president and CEO of the OPPA, who are with us in the gallery, and all members of the Police Association of Ontario.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I would like to present my niece, Shauna Martiniuk Rajaratnam, who is in the gallery along with her children, Ethan, Sumner, Jared and Pyper.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have some guests here in the members' east gallery. Bill Thompson and John Kristensen won a lunch with the MPP at a silent auction recently, and they look forward to attending question period this morning.

I have two police officers from the Peterborough Lakefield police services who will be joining us shortly: Jeff Chartier and David McFadden.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Carol Sweeney from the Toronto-Danforth riding, visiting us here today.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: It is a pleasure to welcome Mike Tarini and Ken Rice, who are both with the North

Bay police service. We're delighted to have them here today down from North Bay to visit with us.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Please welcome Steve Boucher and Brenda Lawson from the Ottawa Police Association to Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I had a great meeting this morning with police association representatives from northern Ontario: Gerry Rooney from the Sault Ste. Marie police association, and Rob Steudle, Brian Crocker and Jim Glena from the Thunder Bay police association. Welcome.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I have the great pleasure of introducing, in the members' gallery, the executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Mr. Jim O'Brien. Welcome.

I'd also like to introduce Mr. Jack Sloggett, general manager of HME Mobility Ltd., with the assistive devices program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I believe we have unanimous consent today that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Adoption Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to introduce some people from the Ottawa Police Association who are here today: Stu Feldman, Richard Marcil, Jim Oakes, Glenn Wasson, Dan Brennan and Brenda Lawson.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've added some 75% to Ontario families' hydro bills. You've boasted that rates need to go up even higher. Now, according to media reports, you seem to be on the verge of another major backtrack. But a 10% cut, after almost doubling hydro rates, is a lot like the backtrack you tried to do when you increased the HST by \$1,000 per family and then handed out a small \$50 tax credit.

Premier, why do you think Ontario families can be so easily confused by your back-and-forth, to-and-fro energy policies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased as usual to receive a question, but obviously I'm going to disagree with the math and the numbers put forward by my honourable colleague. I think there's a lot of creativity there. Shortly, the long-term energy plan will be released and he'll get a good sense of exactly what we're talking about in terms of price increases.

We've always said to Ontarians that electricity prices are going to go up and we're going to find a way through our fall economic statement to specifically address that in the way that we have with respect to so many other issues that concern our families, including, for example, our children's activity tax credit—we'll be voting on that on third reading very shortly. I'll be very interested in

learning whether or not the opposition parties support that important new benefit for Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, all that Ontario families are seeing is a McGuinty government scrambling, a government whose energy plans have gone off the rails. Ontario families won't be so easily confused by this latest backtrack.

The finance minister also tried to confuse hydro issues yesterday. You know that Ontario families have paid \$7.8 billion in debt retirement charges on their hydro bills. When asked about that, the finance minister tried to confuse the issue by talking about another hydro unfunded liability altogether that has nothing to do with debt retirement charges.

Premier, why are you trying to confuse Ontario families, or don't you want them to know exactly where those debt retirement charge dollars have gone?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Finance spoke to that issue yesterday and, I thought, very clearly and particularly demonstrated that each and every year we continue to pay down the debt retirement charge.

I think what families are concerned about is ensuring that we have a clean, modern, reliable supply of electricity. I had an opportunity to speak to some families again this morning. They're telling me that they like clean energy. They like the fact that it means new jobs. They like the fact that it means better health for their children. They like the fact that it means we're going to have reliable electricity because we're building more, but they have a real concern about the cost. That's why, tomorrow, we'll specifically find a way to help families with respect to electricity costs in the way that we have done in the past with respect to their property taxes, children's activity tax credits and the like.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think that Ontario families, after seven years, have caught on to you. They're not going to be so easily confused by your scrambling when it comes to their hydro bills or the debt retirement charge.

Premier, as you probably know, the original plan was to have the debt retirement charge gone by 2012. With no explanation whatsoever, you pushed it back to 2015, and your finance minister used interest as an excuse. Interest rates are at historic lows. If anything, the hydro debt should have been repaid earlier than the target date of 2012. It's very alarming that your finance minister doesn't seem to understand that, or maybe clearly the plan is for your government to try to confuse families on the issue. Premier, if you didn't put the money towards retiring the residual stranded debt, where exactly did the \$7.8 billion go?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my colleague the Minister of Finance spoke to this yesterday. We have steadily reduced the stranded debt by about \$1 billion in each of the last six years. It's now \$5.7 billion lower than it was in 2003. On their watch, they added \$1 billion to

the stranded debt. They added a billion to the debt; we've taken \$5.7 billion off the debt.

At the same time, we're investing in a modern, clean, reliable electricity system. Families want clean electricity. They want us to shut down dirty, coal-fired generation. They want us to do more to protect the health of their children and our seniors. They want to make sure that we have more jobs. They want to make sure we have a reliable electricity system. That's our plan. They also want us to help them out with costs, and that's what we'll be speaking about tomorrow.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It's very disappointing to see the Premier engaging in this effort to try to confuse Ontario families when it comes to the debt retirement charge and the residual stranded debt. The Premier is talking about another unfunded liability altogether. Premier, you know that it's paid for through Hydro One, through OPG, through the LDCs. Premier, I believe that you actually do know this: that the debt retirement charge payments go towards the residual stranded debt, that \$7.8 billion. Families have already paid \$7.8 billion, and for some reason, you've postponed how much longer that's going to be on their bills from 2012 to 2015.

Ontario families want to know: What did you do with the money? Premier will you do the right thing? Will you post publicly the value of the residual stranded debt and will you put it on people's hydro bills each and every year so they know exactly where their money is really going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let's start with some facts. The unfunded liability, his last day in office, the day the people of Ontario threw him and his party out of office, was \$20.5 billion. That has been reported in every audited financial statement of the province of Ontario year in and year out. What was reported from 1999 through 2003—in spite of the fact that they put a debt retirement charge on people's bills, not one penny of that money from 1999 to 2003 was applied to the debt. Why? Because they wanted to try and pretend they were keeping the price—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the finance minister knows the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Peterborough.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know the finance minister actually knows the facts on this file. You know that the debt retirement charge is to go to the residual stranded debt of \$7.8 billion. You have postponed the date that was supposed to be paid down from 2012 to 2015. You've given no explanation, and families rightly want to know

where the money that they have paid—for some families, over \$100 a year—where did it all go?

We understand your game plan. We've had some insight into Liberal plans. You want to confuse voters, you want to confuse the media when it comes to hydro prices in our province, and now you won't even answer a very simple question. What did you do with the \$7.8 billion? Why don't you come clean, publish it and then put the actual amount on hydro bills so Ontario families have transparency?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A few more facts: The Leader of the Opposition and his party, when they were in power, set up something called an unfunded liability through the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.

The leader knows that he's not telling the full story. Every penny of every debt retirement charge since 2004 has gone against that debt.

Interjection: Every cent.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Every cent. We have not changed the mechanism that he and his party set up. So if he's saying that people are confused, it's because of the system they set up, which is still in place. The only thing people are confused about is what he will do to ensure safe, clean, reliable electricity in the future for all Ontarians. That's what they're confused about. No plan, no idea, more of the same—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is coming from a finance minister in a party that said they wouldn't raise taxes on Ontario families and then jammed them with tax increase after tax increase after tax increase. This is a party that said that hydro bills would go up 1% and now they're going through the roof for Ontario families and businesses.

The reason why: They brought forward a hidden tax on hydro. They want to do it on natural gas. They have exorbitant subsidies for expensive energy experiments like the sweetheart Samsung deal. Your smart meters have turned into nothing more than tax machines on seniors and Ontario families, and then the debt retirement charge, on top of it all, is not going to its stated purpose of reducing the residual stranded debt.

Now, just a year out from an election campaign, you're suddenly backtracking from your hydro policy. Ontario families won't be fooled. Why are you trying to confuse the families who—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We're trying to un-confuse the Leader of the Opposition. Let me use his numbers. He is absolutely right: \$7.8 billion has been collected on the debt retirement charge. Some \$5.7 billion of that decreased the principal and \$1.5 billion of that went to pay the hidden cost of their price freeze, which he has refused to acknowledge in this House. The other thing is it has gone to pay interest.

Later today, we're going to vote for a children's tax credit. We're going to do the right thing in terms of

people having clean, green energy. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to review what you yourself did some 10 years ago. Get with the game. We're going to create a cleaner, safer, more reliable and affordable energy system for our children and grandchildren. That's what's important, not you confusing reality with your stubborn refusal to accept the facts—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I remind the Minister of Economic Development and the Minister of Health that the debate is to take place in here, not with staff in the chamber behind the Speaker.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. On at least 55 separate occasions in this Legislature, New Democrats have called on the McGuinty government to take the HST off hydro. On 55 different occasions, the McGuinty Liberals have insisted, to quote the Premier, that "electricity bills are going up" and that providing families with relief would bankrupt the province and shut off the lights. What's the government's position today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. We look forward to presenting the fall economic statement in the House tomorrow and I can tell you that it will pursue a direction that we've been following for some time now. While we continue to invest in a modern, clean, reliable electricity system, we also want to be mindful of the impact this is having on household expenses.

Just as we've put forward a children's activity tax credit, an energy and property tax credit that will benefit seniors, a sales tax credit that will benefit families to the tune of \$260 per member—that's \$1,040 for a family of four—we're also mindful of the pressures that our electricity plan is putting on families. Families are saying, "We like clean electricity; we like the fact that it's good for our health; we're concerned about the price"; and we intend to help them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: When the Premier slapped the HST on families, he claimed it would be revenue-neutral; it wouldn't cost them. When he turned to the private sector for our electricity needs, he claimed it would save money. Now he wants families to believe he will save them from the high electricity costs that he in fact created—high energy costs that until, let's say, yesterday he didn't care about. Why would families believe him today?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I took the opportunity just a moment ago to list the many and various ways in which we are supporting families through tax credits and per-

sonal income tax cuts and the like. But I must say that I am disappointed with the party—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Tick-tock, the clock will run.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I remember a time when the NDP stood for the environment. I remember a time when they stood for shutting down dirty coal. I remember a time when they stood for investing in renewable energy. I remember a time when they stood for new clean and green jobs. I remember a time when they wanted to invest in a reliable electricity system. But, sadly, those times are gone by. I want to reassure Ontario families that those times are here for us. They always will be. We will invest in the system, we will make it cleaner, we will make it more reliable and we will help families with their costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say that the Premier gets more and more inventive as time goes by. He should recognize that families and seniors have been crying out for help for some time. Now that the government needs help, they suddenly hear them. The same government that slapped the HST on hydro bills and drove up rates with private sector deals now says they'll offer solutions. Premier Gordon Campbell in BC resorted to desperate measures to save himself. Does the Premier think that this measure will save him?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the focus on the issues that my honourable colleague brings, but let's talk about some of the important things that I think are concerns for families.

We have in fact for some time now been putting forward a number of measures to better help families when it comes to their household expenses. I think one of the discouraging things in all this is that the opposition parties fail to support us in this. They say we need to do more to help families, but when it comes to each and every measure that we've put forward, they fail to stand up.

Shortly—later today, in fact—we're going to be voting for third reading on the Children's Activity Tax Credit Act. It's \$50 per child; it's \$100 if you have a couple of kids; it's \$200 when you add it on top of the federal program. We think that's real and meaningful to our families. It's all about ensuring that kids have the opportunity to participate in sports and arts activities and the like. It's a specific example which we're going to give to our parties opposite today to see whether or not they support helping families, and we look forward to seeing their actions.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the last two months, New Democrats have been telling the stories of people who are struggling to pay their bills and putting their concerns

on the agenda, stories of families like Dick and Francie Wilhelm from Windsor, who write: "Please help two retired seniors on their hydro bills." To those real concerns, the Premier said that hydro bills simply have to go up. Now he has apparently changed his mind. If the Premier was wrong about that, what else was he wrong about?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we've been very open and honest with Ontarians from the outset. We said that we inherited a system that was in a terrible state of disrepair. We thought that it was important that we bring a responsible approach to ensuring that we had in place reliable electricity, so we invested heavily in new generation and in new transmission, and we're particularly proud of the focus we put on clean electricity, clean energy, because it means jobs, it means better health for our children and our seniors in particular.

You know, there was a study done back in 2005, I believe, which said that dirty electricity, coal-fired electricity, which my friend opposite used to stand against, was costing us \$3 billion in health costs. It meant premature death; it meant a higher rate of hospitalization and breathing problems, especially for children. We are investing in a new system. It's a cleaner system. There are costs associated with that, and we're going to be doing more to help families meet those costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The measures that have been reported in the press indicate very clearly that the Premier knows he was wrong, and that suddenly he has to promise action on hydro bills. He has insisted that the HST and his corporate tax giveaways will create jobs. They haven't. Since the Premier is now re-evaluating his deeply held beliefs, can we expect him to change his mind on this as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague will know that, as we do some heavy lifting—I think, frankly, our generation has taken this on, and I speak on behalf of all Ontarians here—and as we work to lay a foundation for new economic growth in this post-recession world, we knew it was important that we modernize our tax system. As we did that, we put in place supports for our families, like the personal income tax cut, like the sales tax credit, like our transition benefit—the second instalment will be coming to families in the month of December.

Just as we've helped them as we've moved forward on the HST, we are also determined to help families when it comes to building a modern electricity system. That's what our fall economic statement is all about. It's about acknowledging that, as we do this heavy work, our generation of Ontarians, to invest in a modern, reliable, clean electricity system, there are costs that have to be borne by all of us, but we want to make sure that we're helping families bear those costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier has made it clear that his principles can change at any time, whether it's online

gambling or helping families with the high cost of electricity. This government has made a number of risky commitments to expensive nuclear power, to reckless corporate tax cuts and to an unfair sales tax. Can the Premier tell us which of his deeply held beliefs he'll change today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to say that we're never going to stop doing what we think is right for Ontario families. We know that they want us to build a stronger foundation for economic growth. We know that they want us to invest in a clean, modern, reliable electricity system.

But I think where they are concerned is that we've got a new NDP here today. There was a time when they stood against dirty coal; there was a time they'd go to the wall for renewable electricity; there was a time they'd go to the wall for new clean and green jobs. There was a time when they stood for all of those things, but now they've given that up, and we're going to see just how determined they are to support families, because we bring forward our measure tomorrow in the fall economic statement. It will be interesting to see whether or not the NDP stand up in support of more support for Ontario families.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Hydro and natural gas stakeholders launched a constitutional challenge of Premier McGuinty's special purposes charge. This charge has been called a hidden tax on hydro and natural gas. At first, the Minister of Energy's plan was to deny the hidden taxes on hydro and natural gas. Then, on November 1 and 2, the minister changed his tune and repeatedly said in this House that the hidden taxes on hydro and natural gas had been scrapped.

If the hidden taxes on hydro and natural gas have been scrapped, why was the Attorney General attending the Ontario Energy Board hearings defending them on November 5? Why was he defending them if they've been scrapped?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to speak to the issue because it gives me an opportunity to talk about all of the incredible initiatives that this government has taken over the last seven years when it comes to conservation.

We have invested in conservation, and the result is 1,700 megawatts of energy saved across this province. That's billions of dollars of costs that we would have had to accrue in building more energy as we tried to make up for the lack of investment from the party opposite that we inherited seven years ago.

I look forward to bringing forward our long-term energy plan. In our long-term energy plan, I'm quite confident you will see that Ontario will continue to be a North American leader in conservation. Conservation will continue to be a part of our long-term energy future here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: They just continually try to confuse the Ontario public, but they will not be fooled. A pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty is trying to confuse Ontario families about what they're going to pay for his expensive energy experiments.

He told Ontario families that his smart meter tax machines would save them money. We know they don't. He confuses the \$7.8-billion debt Ontario families are paying with a larger unfunded liability so he can keep collecting debt retirement charges.

Even the Attorney General is confused. He is still pursuing a hidden tax grab on hydro and natural gas that the Minister of Energy has repeated time and time again was scrapped. Is the Attorney General defending the hidden hydro and natural gas taxes because you're planning to bring them back later?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is the government—one of the first governments; maybe the only government in a long, long time in this province—that has been very honest with Ontarians when it comes to the need to invest in our energy system. We know that those investments come at a cost. I think what Ontarians need to know is, where do the Tories stand on this? Do they support our investments in building a stronger energy system, investing in new generation? Apparently not: They certainly do not support those investments. Do they support our investments in building a cleaner energy system, cleaning our air and improving our health? There are important investments if we want to build a stronger, cleaner energy system. We stand squarely behind those investments. Do they support the investments we've made to build a more reliable system of energy? Clearly, they do not. I look forward to contrasting our energy plan with their lack of a plan over the course of the next number of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

RETIREMENT HOMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. We read with complete horror the gross financial and personal mistreatment of vulnerable seniors at a Toronto retirement home. These frightened, hungry, and nearly destitute seniors cried out for help and nobody heard them. The safeguards that were supposed to be protecting their health and financial security are too little, too late. Now, some are dead; many of them are left with nothing. Will the Premier commit to establishing, right now, an arm's-length system which these vulnerable seniors can turn to for help?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The minister responsible for seniors.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you for the question. This is absolutely a very important question because, on this side of the House, the government is committed to protecting our seniors. This situation is another reason why it is so important that our registry system that we are creating is important to move forward. We are on track

and we are going to continue moving forward. For the first time in 20 years, we're creating the Retirement Homes Act. That, specifically, will help seniors who are living in retirement homes, especially when it comes to the care that they receive or to strengthening the protections that they'll be receiving, including if there is any kind of abuse, whether it is financial—we're going to make sure that we protect them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to go back to the Premier. The Toronto Star investigation shed light on seniors who were neglected, malnourished and robbed in a retirement home, and no one would investigate their complaints. They had nowhere to turn to until the Toronto Star started doing the investigation and exposed an industry that has regularly defied the existing laws and violated the trust of those people. Bill 21, the Retirement Homes Act, will do nothing to change this. It will leave it up to the industry to police itself. There are more and more vulnerable and high-need residents ending up in retirement homes because Bill 21 does not put a limit on the level of care that can be provided in the retirement home.

My question: How is this possible in 2010? How is it possible that seniors are abused, starved and robbed and have nowhere to appeal their treatment, with or without Bill 21?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Again, the seriousness of that Toronto Star investigation was extremely important, but it also was very disturbing. That is why we are committed to continue moving forward on the Retirement Homes Act. It is extremely important that we do not stop and start with new legislation. We have a Retirement Homes Act that is going to protect our seniors. We are doing everything we possibly can right now.

Some of the things that we are doing: The new Retirement Homes Act, which is going to be moving forward, is going to protect seniors by compliance with safety and care standards in all retirement homes. We're going to register all retirement homes. We will go in and inspect retirement homes. The establishment of a regulatory authority to license and inspect homes is also going to create a bill of rights to protect residents' rights. At the end of the day, protecting our seniors is our number one priority, and we're going to continue with our Retirement Homes Act.

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL GRADUATES

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. My constituents in Mississauga–Brampton South are comprised greatly of recent immigrants. Some of them have received their medical training abroad. These international medical graduates come to Canada with the hopes of applying their training to practice, but too often those skills are not recognized in Ontario. Minister, can you tell this House

what our government is doing to help these international medical graduates in my riding and across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for the question. She is absolutely correct: For far too long, too many internationally trained doctors have not had their credentials recognized here in Ontario. It's an issue we've taken very seriously, and we've taken important steps to correct the problem.

According to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the total number of certificates issued to IMGs in the past decade has increased by an unprecedented 119%. In 2004-05, we more than doubled the number of residency spaces for IMGs, from 90 to 200 a year, but in 2008-09, we surpassed our own target and offered 224 residency spots. In 2009-10, a total of 221 positions were offered.

We're currently supporting over 700 international medical—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, I believe that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds. I know some communities in Ontario have had difficulties recruiting and retaining doctors. At the same time, there are international medical graduates seeking to practise. Are any innovative solutions being proposed or implemented that address both these concerns simultaneously?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have more than 5,800 international medical graduates practising in Ontario. That's almost a quarter of the physician workforce. These physicians are a big part of the reason we've been able to attach more than one million Ontarians to primary health care.

But nowhere in the province is the challenge of access to care greater than in northern Ontario. That's why we introduced the northern and rural recruitment and retention initiative, the NRRR program. It provides direct financial incentives to physicians who practise in the north and in our most rural communities. These are the communities that have faced the biggest challenges in recruiting physicians.

In addition, the postgraduate return of service program opens the door to international medical graduates who agree to practise for five years, anywhere in Ontario outside of Toronto and Ottawa, in exchange for postgraduate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. In recent media reports, Dr. Robertushman, CEO of the Champlain LHIN, indicated he is looking to Mississauga hospitals for best practices on how to slash emergency room wait times. My question is: How soon before Ottawa patients will be seeing garages used as emergency rooms, just like Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock. Ministers, order.
Minister?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am appalled that the opposition would employ the tactic that they are employing.

Interjection: They continue to do it.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They continue with their drive-by smear campaign of the professionals who work in our health care system.

I visited Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga. I'm not sure anyone from that caucus has visited the hospital. I spoke to front-line health care providers. I spoke to the emergency department nurses and doctors who showed me exactly what happened in Credit Valley Hospital. To suggest for one moment that patient safety was compromised is a complete fabrication. They are making it up. It is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I don't need your help.

The member will withdraw the comment that she made, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This is in no way a smear with respect to Credit Valley Hospital. What it is is an indictment of the complete failure of the McGuinty health care policies, which have resulted in 190 nurses being cut at the Ottawa Hospital. And now emergency room wait times are up, despite the best efforts of what's being done at the hospitals.

What I would like to know from the minister is what you are planning to do when hospitals are being forced to use substandard facilities for emergency rooms because of your lack of policy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For the party opposite to be arguing that infrastructure investments haven't been made, haven't been adequate, is completely laughable. I would compare our infrastructure investments against the ones you made when you were in office. You closed hospitals; we're opening hospitals. Let me tell you, Speaker, if they have their way, they're going to cut \$3 billion out of health care, and trust me, infrastructure expenditures will come to a screeching halt.

It's no coincidence that their members are advocating for hospitals to be included in infrastructure capital plans, because if they get their plan, there will be no more construction in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question? The member from Nickel Belt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. I don't like it because I can't hear, and neither can our guests who are watching today.

New question.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

In the Legislature this morning, we are joined by many small business owners who supply Ontarians with medically necessary assistive devices such as wheelchairs or oxygen. Those business owners are frustrated with the extraordinary delays at the ministry's assistive devices program. The ministry is forcing small business owners to wait up to six months for payment. They have to supply the device, and then they wait and wait and wait for payment to come. This is causing financial ruin for operators and placing Ontarians' access to those devices in jeopardy.

How has the minister allowed the ADP to become such the crisis it is today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In the supplementary, I'll address the issue of what we are doing to clean up the backlog, and I do acknowledge that there has been a delay in payment for some of the vendors in this program. But let's just pause for a minute and think about what we've done in the assistive devices program. We're serving almost 70,000 more Ontarians than when we took office in 2003. We've added insulin pumps, we've added related supplies and oxygen saturation monitors to the list of funded supplies. We've nearly doubled funding on the assistive devices program to almost \$400 million.

We are there for people who need the equipment. This significant expansion has created some backlogs, and I'm more than happy to discuss that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It looks to me like the government is quite happy to have their new program funded on the backs of small business owners who have to put the services and the devices forward but don't get paid.

The member from Welland was the first one who brought this issue to the attention of the minister and told her that a crisis was growing. Just this week, a business with locations in Hamilton, Mississauga and Toronto went into receivership, and there are many more that are barely surviving—they're right here if you'd like to talk to them. It is unconscionable that small businesses are facing bankruptcy because the ministry is so slow at paying them.

What is the minister's plan for getting the program up and running, so that those people here and the many more in Ontario get the payment that is due to them in a timely manner?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is an issue that we are aware of, and we are taking that action. In fact, we have now doubled the number of people working in the claims review department. We are actually getting that backlog reduced, and we are on our way to where we want to be in getting speedy payment to the vendors. We're introducing an automatic approval of invoices, and we're combining applications to further streamline the process. We're also working on a new IT system.

We acknowledge that our partners in the assistive devices program deserve to be treated in a responsible way and we're working to rectify that situation.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. In my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, there are 48 elementary schools and nine high schools. With this many students, it's hardly surprising that my constituents are concerned about keeping our students safe, and they ask what role they can play to help.

I know there are a number of initiatives that have been put forward by this government to make schools safer. Bullying is a serious issue that can impact all students. Parents in my riding feel that schools should be places where positive examples of how people should behave toward one another are reinforced.

Minister, with schools having such a key role to play in the development of students' attitudes towards one another, what is this government doing to recognize the work of schools that are making a real effort in this regard?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I very much appreciate the question, especially since this is bullying awareness and prevention week. We have students in our gallery, so I think it's important that they know we do talk about the issue of bullying. It is a very serious one.

I've had the opportunity to be in schools over these weeks. I certainly understand first-hand that staff, students and their families are working very hard to deal with this issue in a substantive way. That is why today, we will be announcing that there will be a new award to recognize the exceptional and innovative work that's being done throughout Ontario to foster safe and inclusive schools.

Now, the Premier's Safe Schools Awards will recognize up to 10 safe school teams who have achieved outstanding results with their programs and initiatives. I think this is a very positive thing that we are doing to reinforce our message again—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Constituents in my riding have contacted my office regarding the announcement that was made yesterday at a high school where programs were announced regarding new safety-at-school initiatives. With the recent scare because of a number of home invasions that have happened in Markham, my constituents want to make sure that their children are safe while they're at school, as well as in their homes. Will the minister tell the House how the partnership with the broader community helps keep students safe at school?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Keeping students safe at school is an important issue for everyone within the school and within our community. That is why yesterday, I was very happy to have been joined by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We were in a school and we talked about new funding for safe

school grants. These will help strengthen partnerships with police services in our communities to again focus on student safety and appropriate student activity.

Schools will have the opportunity to work, in this case, with police services in their area, to make those connections, to implement and employ strategies that will keep students informed about what bullying is, why it's inappropriate and, when they encounter it, what they should do, where they should go and how we can continue to make our schools safer places for everyone to be.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Attorney General and is similar to a question I asked a year ago to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Today, we welcome the Police Association of Ontario. Welcome to you guys. They are here for their annual lobby day. Your SIU director, Ian Scott, has made public comments that clearly show a lack of respect and bias toward our outstanding and committed police officers, the very men and women he is to oversee and investigate. In a Toronto Star article from October 28, 2010, he says, "Police officers get all kinds of breaks in the (criminal justice) system."

Minister, do you agree that comments made by the SIU director can be taken as direct criticism of the Attorney General, crown counsels, prosecutors and judges?

1120

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Everyone who comes before our system of justice, whether it's the investigative stage or the court stage, has the right, whether they are the complainant or the subject of an investigation, to be treated impartially, fairly, and reasonably.

The SIU was set up decades ago to help achieve those principles when the police were the subject, or potentially the subject, of an investigation. Now, for decades there have been issues, there have been reports and there have been suggestions through all governments, and sometimes these bubble over.

Several months ago, we asked Chief Justice LeSage to work with all of the parties to see if we could advance a resolution to some of these long-standing issues. I've asked him to undertake the second stage of that review, to get a fair, long-standing resolution to these very important—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, given the SIU director's comments in the Toronto Star article of October 28, how can a police officer being investigated by the SIU expect to be investigated in a fair and impartial manner?

The PAO believes, and this PC caucus believes, that the government needs to restore confidence in the SIU. Will you take immediate action, intervene, and hold the SIU director, Ian Scott, accountable to this province?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I and all members of the Legislature welcome the Police Association representatives to the Legislature. We thank them for what they do. We thank them for the risks they take every single day in defending us and our communities and the people of our communities.

These issues have been around for decades. The SIU director is independent. And sometimes, we will all recognize, the challenge in making public comments is that they can be interpreted many different ways by many different people.

We have asked former Chief Justice LeSage to work with all the parties to come forward with a resolution to issues that have been around for decades, very strongly held issues. I thank him for the work that he is doing and I look forward to the hope for a resolution.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Every day, more and more service employees, from bartenders to servers to valets, have contacted me and my office pleading for the egregious tip-out practice to end. If I'm getting those calls, so is the minister. A valet who works at a high-end Niagara Falls hotel and casino to support himself through university stated the following: "In my hotel, valets' tips are collected and distributed among the management. They are not documented or reported."

When will this minister begin to understand that tips are in fact wages, and do something, anything, other than mouth platitudes on how hard these people work?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First I want to thank the member for having brought forward his private member's bill. I want to commend him on that and allowing for this matter to be debated in the House. It is being debated, and we are hearing from many different stakeholders. We continue to consult and engage with stakeholders.

As the member said, we understand how hard those hospitality workers work and the service that they provide and the value to this province of Ontario, where we know that tourism is a great economic driver here for our province.

I will continue to meet with those workers, to consult with those workers. We've brought forward many, many protections since coming to government in 2003 to better protect all of our workers, especially our most vulnerable workers, and we will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Every time I ask this question or a question like this, I hear no answer at all, no real commitment to fix this massive problem. Tens of thousands of workers have their money stolen from them every day. Owners and managers don't declare this income and pay no taxes on it. If they are challenged, they threaten the staff with firing or loss of hours. It happens every day.

The valet who wrote to me said this: "I have calculated a personal loss of thousands of dollars that could have been used towards my education." Why won't this

minister agree it's time to take action, pass Bill 114 or at least put in your own bill that will deal with it?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I think the member should stop and refrain from smearing thousands of business owners across the province.

When it comes to employment standards, let's look at our record on protecting workers, especially our most vulnerable workers. Between 1989 and 2003, there were only 97 prosecutions initiated under the Employment Standards Act. Since then, 2004 forward, we have had over 1,800 prosecutions initiated. That shows where we stand when it comes to protecting our most vulnerable workers.

I look forward to the continued debate on this matter through the private member's bill. Also, I have looked into another matter; the private member asked about a letter that had been written to the ministry. We have gotten that information. There was a letter sent to that constituent. I can say that to the member at this time.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The province of Ontario is home to some of the world's top police services. Across our province, we have thousands of dedicated, well-trained police officers who put their personal safety on the line each and every day in order to keep Ontario families safe. On behalf of the members of this House, I would like to personally extend a warm welcome to the Police Association of Ontario, an organization that represents over 33,000 police and civilian members from every Ontario municipal police association, and the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

I recall a time when budgets were being slashed across Ontario's justice system, but across-the-board government cutbacks meant fewer police officers patrolling Ontario streets. Ontarians are concerned about public safety. Could the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services explain what the government is doing to support Ontario's police officers?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's a very good question. This government has been working tirelessly with our partners in the law enforcement community to make Ontario an even safer place in which to live. Today in Ontario, there are more than 2,000 more police officers working to keep our communities safe. Many of these new officers have been placed on the front lines, patrolling communities across the province day and night.

Additional officers have been placed in dedicated units to address key priority areas such as youth crime, organized crime, dangerous offenders and domestic violence. Dozens more have been placed with the provincial guns and gangs task force, a highly successful \$51-million strategy that is working to tackle gun violence and other gang-related crime in the GTA. We've also increased the number of police officers in our remote First Nations communities. We are moving forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: In their 2006 election platform, the federal Conservative government promised to put an additional 2,500 police officers on Canadian streets. At the time this was a welcome commitment, not only in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans, but across the province of Ontario.

It has been brought to my attention that the federal government has fallen short on its promise by providing Ontario with only a fraction of the funding that was promised in the federal Conservative 2006 platform.

To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Can you explain what Ontario is doing with its share of the federal funds, and further, what steps Ontario is taking to hold the federal Conservatives to their election promise?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member is correct. The police officers recruitment fund program—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The police officers recruitment fund program that was established in the 2008 federal budget has fallen far short of the federal Conservatives' election promise. The program we have today provides only a fraction of the funding that is required to put 2,500 police officers on the streets. Further, the program is time-limited; it will end in just two years' time.

That said, the House will be pleased to know that Ontario is the only province that has dedicated every last dime of its portion of the program to front-line police officers. There are 125 new OPP officers, 164 municipal police officers and 40 new officers for First Nations communities.

Last month, Ontario stood, along with our PAO, and led the charge at the annual meeting of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, why are you pursuing closer relations and increased trade with Syria while its authoritarian government provides refuge for terrorists?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. I certainly understand that, as is the role of this government, we pursue trade negotiations and improved trade with a number of countries around the world.

I'm not specifically aware of the specific aspects of your question with regard to that country in question, but I will say that, as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, we welcome individuals from all across the world, including many individuals who have their country of origin as Syria.

We have a strong and vibrant Syrian-Canadian population residing here in Ontario. I certainly am, and I know that this government is as well, very proud of the contributions that that community has made, both to businesses that are thriving in this province as well as to increasing trade and bringing future growth and prosperity to this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: According to media reports, the minister was a guest of a Syrian government official at a luncheon to promote trade with Syria. Syria is an authoritarian—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We're perhaps 40 days from Christmas. Maybe the Speaker needs to start the list of who has been naughty or nice and give some people some early Christmas vacations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: Syria is an authoritarian state that sponsors terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas leader Khaled Mashal operates out of a well-protected Syrian compound, and Syria has been referred to in the media by some as an errand boy for Iran and Hezbollah.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has shown remarkably bad judgment. Does the minister regret his show of support for a nation that considers itself at war with Israel, one of Canada's strongest allies and the only mature democracy in the Middle East?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think this is a very important piece of information that we need to make sure that Ontario residents understand.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important that Ontario residents understand that our government, our ministry, is prepared to go around the world to bring jobs back to Ontario and to encourage our Ontario companies to do business with the world.

The member opposite will know full well that we spent, just a couple of months ago, time discovering opportunities in Israel, in the West Bank and in Lebanon. Following, four weeks later, was a visit from the industry minister for Lebanon. We have active groups who are searching the world for infrastructure projects, in particular across the Middle East, where we are increasing our level of activity.

We understand that these governments are looking for opportunities to work with very good Ontario companies to increase infrastructure in their own country so they can see the kinds of opportunities that we've enjoyed in Ontario for many decades already.

So if this opposite member—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. There are literally thousands of cabins, cottages and homes, and many tourist resorts, on Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake. Most of them use propane to meet their energy needs. Sometimes the propane is delivered by truck, where there is road access; sometimes it is delivered by barge over the water, where there is no road access. It has come to the attention of people that American companies are saying to people who live on the lake, "Use us as your supplier of propane, and you will not have to pay the HST."

Can the minister explain why companies that operate out of Kenora or Fort Frances have to charge the HST, but companies based in Minnesota are providing this service in Canada without charging the HST?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I thank the member for that question, and he's right: We all use propane in some form, and a lot of people who live up north do use propane; it's an important thing for all of us. But what the member should know is that any company that is selling goods or services in the province must collect all the federal and provincial taxes, including the HST. So I am unaware of that specific situation, but I will definitely follow up with the CRA and see exactly what is going on, and we will investigate.

But the fact is, what we are doing for businesses when it comes to our tax reform package is that we have created a business-friendly environment. We're helping businesses, building stronger businesses for our communities, and when businesses succeed, people succeed: They get jobs, and we invest in businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, I would say this: The McGuinty government has certainly made it business-friendly for the propane operators operating out of Baudette, Minnesota, and International Falls, Minnesota, but you're putting the operators based in Kenora and Fort Frances out of business. That's what is happening.

But it is more serious than that, because people are now asking, "Do these companies meet the technical and safety standards of the TSSA?" They've raised that issue, and they have not received a very good response from your government on that issue either.

Companies operating out of Fort Frances and Kenora have to meet the TSSA standards and they have to charge the HST, but it seems that for American companies doing business in Ontario, that's not a requirement. What is your government going to do about it?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: The member brings up a very important question. I did say that I will follow up with the CRA regarding an investigation. We know that all companies that are selling any goods or services in

our province have to collect all federal and provincial taxes, including the HST.

We have a tax plan, and the tax plan is a great tax plan. I just wish the opposition would see that.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy concerning hidden taxes. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY TAX CREDIT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR LES ACTIVITÉS DES ENFANTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 99, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour les activités des enfants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Elliott, Christine	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Fonseca, Peter	Murdoch, Bill
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hampton, Howard	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric	Pendergast, Leeanna
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Pupatello, Sandra
Brown, Michael A.	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Caplan, David	Jones, Sylvia	Ramsay, David
Carroll, Aileen	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Steve	Mangat, Amrit	Shurman, Peter
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	McGuinty, Dalton	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Yakubuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 80; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Ms. Smith for allocation of time on Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, please take their seats.

On November 16, Ms. Smith moved government notice of motion number 33. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona

Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Johnson, Rick
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol

Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France

Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry

Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael
Shuman, Peter
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 56; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would like to introduce some guests in the members' gallery today. I want to welcome Will Falk, Cheryl Appell and Robin Cardozo, three members of the expert panel on infertility and adoption. We also have with us here today Mary Ballantyne, Keith Sparling, Virginia Rowden and Rory Gleeson from the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. They're joining us today as we recognize Adoption Awareness Month. Welcome to all of you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask all members to join me as we welcome to the Speaker's gallery today guests here for the tribute to be held for Leo Edward Bernier, member of the 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd Parliaments.

Joining us in the Speaker's gallery are Don Bernier, Claire Bernier, Jacqueline Bernier, Michael Bernier, Alex Bernier, John Bernier, Karen Cast, Butch Cast, Alyssa Cast, Robert Cast, Anna Cast, Robert McCaig, Janet Taylor, Bill Morris, Joanne Morris, Gord Warren and Karen Warren. Welcome all to Queen's Park today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOOD BANKS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yesterday, Food Banks Canada released its report titled HungerCount 2010. This report is a comprehensive analysis of hunger and food bank use in Canada.

The report's findings are simply alarming: Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians continue to struggle daily to make ends meet and simply cannot make it through the month without the assistance of their local food bank. As a result, Ontario's food banks are being stretched too far, and many are scrambling to keep food on the shelves and their doors open for their local communities.

HungerCount 2010 specifically tracked the usage of Ontario food banks during the month of March 2010. In March alone, over 402,000 Ontarians used the service of an Ontario food bank in order to meet their basic needs. This is an increase of almost 8% over the last year alone and a whopping 28% since 2008. The most troubling of all is that 37% of those using Ontario food banks are children. That's 150,000 Ontario children in 2009 alone. This is the result of this government's so-called poverty reduction strategy.

My bill, Bill 78, a bill to fight hunger with local food, will provide a tax credit for farmers who donate their excess produce to local food banks. Estimates suggest that in the first year alone, Bill 78 would yield an additional five million pounds of fresh produce for Ontario's food banks and cost the province almost nothing.

Each and every day, Ontario's food banks are challenged to meet the needs of our province's most vulnerable. It's time this government moved—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

VETERANS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to speak in reference to Remembrance Day week. I acknowledge a lot of people who assisted me: MP Dan McTeague; MP Mark Holland; MPP Wayne Arthurs; Mayors Ryan and Parish; councillors from both municipalities, William Tighe and Dave Johnson; and my wife, Donna, who assisted me.

The month of November is about remembering those who suffered and those who made the supreme sacrifice so that we may be free.

With special recognition to the men and women of Ajax Legion, branch 322, Claremont Legion, branch 483, and Bay Ridges-Pickering Legion, branch 606, we had the honour of attending some 14 events.

Friday, November 5: With Dan McTeague, we attended the Tony Stacey Centre for Veterans Care fundraiser at the Ajax Convention Centre.

November 6: We showed support at the Remembrance Day dinner at the Bay Ridges Legion.

November 7: We supported all three Remembrance Day activities, and that was both of the Ajax and Pickering Remembrance parades, wreath-laying ceremonies at St. Paul's United Church, Claremont Remembrance Day prayer service, and wreath-laying and prayers at the Pickering Memorial. As well, Bay Ridges Legion, Claremont Legion and Veterans Fellowship events were held.

November 10—oh, gosh, I'm really short on time. There were so many events. I can only comment by closing that there was a total of 14 events, the last, of course, Remembrance Day. The final dinner on November 14 included MP Holland, Mayor Parish and our wives, Donna, Rose and Cindy.

We shall never forget.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Hundreds of people in my community have signed a petition, which I'll be tabling in the House later today, expressing their discontent with the proposed plan by Walmart to install an 80-foot, 20-kilowatt wind turbine at its Fairview Street location in Burlington.

This government's Green Energy Act has sidestepped municipalities' abilities to make decisions which affect their municipalities and their residents. My concern is that the proper standards and criteria are not in place to ensure that the benefits of wind turbine projects are measured against negative effects in the community. The Ministry of Energy enforces the Green Energy Act. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the approvals process.

Let me put it plain and simple. The Big Brother ways of this government haven't allowed for any recourse. They have become so out of touch and arrogant that they no longer feel the need to listen to their constituents. But I'm listening to my constituents, and they are clear. They

don't want Walmart's proposed wind turbine in Burlington.

This government must begin respecting the vision that local residents have for their community and allow for a credible process that includes municipal and community input before any final provincial decisions are made.

Interjections.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: It's clear that the government is touchy about this, Mr. Speaker.

LOUIS RIEL DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to commemorate that yesterday was Louis Riel Day here on the legislative grounds. There were hundreds of people who came out in what was probably the most pleasant of all the 10 years that I have attended that particular celebration. It is held at the statue of the Northwest Rebellion, which members of the Legislature will know is on the east side of Queen's Park Circle. The statue is there to commemorate those who were sent from Ontario and who died in what was then called the Northwest Rebellion. Yesterday was the 125th anniversary of the death of Louis Riel who, as we all know, was hanged for treason, but it was the 75th anniversary of the founding of the statue. Ontario erected that statue for those who had died at Batoche and other places in defence of what was Canada.

1510

But it is an irony today that the descendants and the followers of Louis Riel and their families were there. There was a poster of Riel. The people were all wearing the coloured sash. Fiddles were playing and speeches were made. History has indeed been very kind to Louis Riel. Some now even suggest he may have been a father of Confederation, and certainly, if he was not that, he was at least the father of multiculturalism in Canada, because he stood up his whole life for minorities.

We were very proud to see Branch 10 of the Royal Canadian Legion, who were there to honour it as well, and my congratulations to members of all parties who stood up to make a speech and to commemorate that great man.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: Clean water is vital to our well-being, which is why our government is actively working to conserve this valuable resource for future generations. We have already successfully made Ontario's water some of the best protected in the world and spurred innovative made-in-Ontario clean water technologies.

The McGuinty government continues to take the steps needed to make Ontario the leading clean water jurisdiction in North America. The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act will encourage the creation and export of innovative clean water technology, promote water conservation, attract economic development and create local jobs. This water opportunities strategy will help focus industry to become more water-

efficient and develop an export sector, which is a key element of our Open Ontario plan.

Our goal is for Ontario to become a hotbed of innovation, scientific expertise and commercial activity in clean water technology and water conservation techniques. We will continue to work with industry, post-secondary institutions and entrepreneurs to attract clean water jobs, expertise and investment while creating a culture of investment in Ontario. Ontario has the ability to be a major player for water and waste water technology on the global stage.

The McGuinty government recognizes our province's potential and will continue to provide the leadership needed to ensure Ontario's long-term sustainability and growth.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: This week, schools across my riding will be putting on a campaign to stop bullying. This week is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

In the information age, bullying has increasingly taken on many different forms. No longer is bullying simply physical or verbal; it is now social and electronic as well. Cyber-bullying, through text messaging, Facebook, MSN and other electronic venues, is just as harmful to a child as being pushed around in the playground.

Throughout the week, schools will be holding a variety of events to raise student awareness about bullying and to stomp it out. Clarke High School student council is leading a poster campaign and hosting individual classroom discussions on the topic of anti-bullying. Courtice Secondary School's Courtice Players will be showcasing an interactive performance on bullying at school and around the area in the community. Orono Public School will be kicking off their peaceful playground program, having a poetry contest and hosting a bullying awareness booth.

I wish to commend not just the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, but the student leaders themselves, for their work towards awareness and ending bullying in our schools and indeed in our communities. Bullying destroys the safe and caring learning environment that all our children deserve.

I ask my colleagues to support these initiatives in their own ridings and work towards bully-free schools—as well in this very Legislature.

NORTHERN HIGHWAYS

Mr. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share a piece of great news on Ontario's road system for northern Ontario motorists. Recently, the Canadian Automobile Association rated the top 20 roads in Ontario, and five of those roads are located in northern Ontario.

Since 2003, our government invested more than \$25 million in improving roads in my riding of Sault Ste.

Marie alone, and this year Carmen's Way and Wellington Street were listed on the CAA's top 20 best roads in Ontario. Other roads from northern Ontario that made the top 20 are located in Sudbury, including Highway 144 and Falconbridge Road.

Significant improvement in road safety has also been made on Highway 69. Since 2003, we have invested almost \$700 million to improve conditions on Highway 69 between Port Severn and Sudbury. We have committed a total of \$2.4 billion for this section of northern highway. Some of the improvements made to Highway 69 since 2003 include: four-laning several sections, the laying of rumble strips to improve driver alertness and the installation of more passing lanes.

Other initiatives to improve road safety include: mandatory speed limiters on trucks, a ban on using handheld electronics while driving, zero blood alcohol levels for young drivers and stringent anti-street racing laws. Previous governments downloaded responsibility for provincial highways to municipalities and failed to four-lane Highway 69 and improve safety for motorists.

I'm very pleased that we're spending over \$773 million to improve northern highways for residents in the province of Ontario.

GO TRANSIT

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Last Friday, I was pleased to welcome Minister Wynne to Guelph to announce that GO rail service will be arriving in Guelph by the end of 2011. This is very welcome news to my constituents, who have been looking forward to the return of GO rail service to Guelph ever since the train was cancelled by the NDP in 1993. Trains will continue on to Kitchener—and that is a first—where a layover will be constructed for overnight train storage.

At events I attended over the weekend, my constituents expressed their strong support of this initiative. We're delighted to learn that the service will include two morning trains to Toronto Union Station and two return afternoon trains. The GO rail service will complement the existing VIA schedule, providing commuters in my community with more options.

This announcement will build on the GO Transit investments made in September 2007, when GO began a new GO bus service between the University of Guelph and Mississauga. Not only will the \$18-million investment in trains help get cars off the road, this project will create approximately 180 design and construction jobs.

I'm proud to be part of a government that understands that better public transit means a better quality of life for Ontario families.

ST. PETER'S SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, you know that on many occasions, I've risen in this House to brag about my riding of Peterborough. I'm very proud of the residents of Peterborough riding and their many accomplishments.

Today is no different, because today I'm going to brag about St. Peter's Secondary School, which became the first school in Canada to raise \$1 million for the cancer foundation.

How did the students and staff at St. Peter's Catholic secondary school raise this amount of money? It was through their commitment to the annual Terry Fox run. Each year, the teachers and staff reward the students by having their faces shoved in bowls of spaghetti, shaving their heads or dyeing their beards rainbow colours. This year they did not disappoint: As the total raised for 2010 neared almost \$100,000, their best year to date, teachers and staff dressed up and performed Michael Jackson's Thriller video, much to the delight of the students. These young people, their teachers and families have embraced the spirit of Terry Fox and his drive to raise money for cancer research.

We have all felt the impact of cancer in our lives: if not personally, then through family members and friends. This year is the 30th anniversary of the Terry Fox Marathon of Hope. This annual event has raised approximately \$500 million worldwide for cancer research. Today, I stand to pay tribute to the legacy of this fine young man and to the students of St. Peter's Secondary School in Peterborough.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SURGE PROTECTOR ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION DE PARASURTENSEURS RÉSIDENTIELS ET COMMERCIAUX DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'installation de parasurtenseurs dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation et les nouveaux immeubles commerciaux.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: This bill is to authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings. The chief building official shall refuse to issue

a building permit if a proposed building does not comply with such a bylaw. The bylaws which may be passed with respect to residential and commercial buildings for which building permit applications are made on or after May 1, 2011, prevail over any act or regulation. Surge protectors that are required to be installed by the bylaw must comply with standards specified in the building code.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 49 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet during the week of January 24, 2011, in London, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Timmins and Ottawa, and to meet in Toronto on Monday, January 31, 2011, and in Toronto on Tuesday, February 1, 2011, for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding sign-language interpreters for certain proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that during the introduction of visitors, oral questions, and members' statements on Tuesday, November 30, 2010, sign-language interpreters may be present on the floor of the chamber to interpret the proceedings to guests in the gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LEO BERNIER

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each party to speak in remembrance of the late Leo Bernier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
The member from Kenora—Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: On behalf of Andrea Horwath and Ontario's New Democrats, I'm pleased to be able to pay tribute to the memory of a great northerner and a great Ontarian, Leo Bernier.

I knew Mr. Bernier personally. In fact, I can say that I knew him up close and personal in election campaigns. There used to be the constituency of Rainy River and there used to be the constituency of Kenora. Mr. Bernier was elected from Kenora. However, at election time he would frequently come to the constituency of Rainy River, and so he campaigned against me in 1977 and in 1985, and, no surprise, I lost both elections. That will tell you something about the formidable nature of Leo Bernier.

He was a huge man. He stood, with his boots on, I would say probably about six foot four, and probably weighed in at about 235 pounds. So when he walked into a room, you noticed him. You couldn't help but notice him.

He also had a booming voice. I don't think Mr. Bernier ever would have needed a microphone in this place, and you could hear him from one end of the room to the other.

But on top of that, he was one of the most profound socializers I've ever met in my life. Notice I said "socializer" and not "socialist." He was always the life of the party. It didn't matter where you walked into, if it was an official meeting, a social gathering, a fall fair, a public meeting of some kind; you immediately knew he was there. The warmth, the friendliness, the capacity to reach out to everybody in the room was something that was very, very evident. So it is no surprise that in 1966 he was elected in the by-election to be the member of provincial Parliament for Kenora.

Now, usually it's thought that to be elected the member of provincial Parliament for a riding like that, you have to be from one of the larger urban centres; you have to be from Kenora, from Dryden, from Red Lake. Leo Bernier was from Hudson. I think the population in Hudson at that time, generously, was about 500 people. But it tells you something about his formidable nature that he could come from the small hamlet of Hudson and dominate larger centres—Kenora, which considers itself Winnipeg-by-the-Lake in the summer because the population goes from 15,000 to 65,000—and yet he won over everyone. So he was quite a competent politician.

But he was more than that. He came to Queen's Park with a mission. Because of his life before electoral politics, he felt that our part of Ontario, northwestern Ontario, was being largely ignored. He came here with a mission that he was going to put the northwestern part of the province on the map, and did he ever. There was no

issue that was too small. There was no issue that was too remote. There was no community that was too small to be part of his vision for northern Ontario. He was perhaps fortunate to be a member of this Legislature when development was very much on everyone's mind, because he very much led the development of northwestern Ontario. Highways that didn't exist—the highway from Atikokan to Ignace, the highway from Fort Frances to Dryden, the highway from Ignace to Savant Lake, the highway to Pickle Lake—all of them, in one way or another, I believe, owe their creation and their completion to the drive of Leo Bernier.

He was also unusual, or I guess ahead of his time, in another way, in that he was one of the first members of this Legislature to travel regularly into northern First Nations communities where you have to either go by plane or you go over the ice road. If any of you have watched the History Channel's Ice Road Truckers, you'll understand something about travelling over the ice roads. Mr. Bernier—Leo, as he liked to be called—was doing this literally 35 and 40 years ago, long before it became a fad of television. No community was too small.

After he left the Legislature, he didn't fade from public view. Any time you were in the area of Sioux Lookout or Hudson, you would bump into him at public events: fundraising for the hospital—we just held the grand opening of the new Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre in Sioux Lookout; he was one of the driving forces—and in all kinds of other things that happened in northwestern Ontario where he continued to be a driving force. He's one of those people who have left their stamp not only on this Legislature but the history of Ontario in so many ways.

I want to say to his family members who are here, thank you for sharing him with us. Thank you for allowing him to contribute to all of Ontario, but especially northern and northwestern Ontario, in the way that he did. We will remember Mr. Bernier in so many ways and we will see, as time goes on in this Legislature, the many ways in which he left his stamp on this province. To his family members, I want to say thank you very much. Thank you for allowing Leo Bernier to contribute so much to this province, and especially to northern Ontario.

1530

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It's a tremendous honour for me to represent the government caucus and Premier McGuinty today as we pay tribute to that great northerner, Leo Bernier, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 81.

While I didn't know Leo as well as some members in the House, such as Jim Bradley or Norm Sterling, both of whom sat in the Legislature with him during his years as minister, I can certainly tell you that Leo was a legendary figure to all of us in northern Ontario. Although he retired from the Legislature in 1987, he has certainly left a long, impressive shadow for those of us who have subsequently been elected to represent northern constituencies over the years.

That might be even more true for those of us who have had the privilege of following in his footsteps as northern

development ministers. The fact is that Leo set a very high standard indeed. As the first minister of a separate, stand-alone ministry with the vast reaches of northern Ontario as his domain, Leo was a true force of nature. Known far and wide as the king of the north, Leo made sure that not only was the north not forgotten but that we were the beneficiaries of government programs and funding as we had never seen before.

It was said that Premier Davis never made a decision that would impact the north without Leo's advice, if not his blessing. At a time in our province's history when the economy was booming, Leo made sure that the north received more than its share of the benefits that went along with those years of prosperity. Of course, it did not hurt at all that Leo was a tall, physically imposing man with a gregarious nature, a big smile and a fierce determination to see that the north's voice would be heard.

When Leo left the Legislature in 1987, after more than 20 years of devoted and remarkably successful service, he continued to be an imposing and influential figure. That became particularly clear to me when I joined the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in 1987 as an employee. Leo's years as minister may have been over, but his presence was still very much felt. I well recall the stories told to me by a number of my ministry colleagues at that time of their years spent working for Leo—they rarely referred to him as "Minister," except when he was there; when he wasn't, they called him Leo. They told me how proud they were to work for him and how intensely loyal they were to him.

That particular reality came home to me very strongly again this past summer when many of those same staffers attended Leo's funeral services in Sioux Lookout. Leo was very clearly a man who left a strong impression on all northerners, but to be with the northern development employees who were determined to pay their last respects to their old boss only reinforced to me the amazing impact he had on his front-line, on-the-ground staff.

It was also at Leo's funeral services that I truly understood that, while he was a commanding presence in politics in northern Ontario, more than anything else he was an extraordinarily well-loved family man: a devoted husband to Marjorie for over 60 years, the father of four children, grandfather of 10 and great-grandfather of eight. Recently widowed, Leo clearly adored his wife, Marj. As Leo's son John said at the time of his passing in a newspaper story I read, "He missed Marj. She was his candle." What was clearly evident at Leo's funeral and the reception that followed was how much his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren truly loved him. What greater legacy can a man leave than a large family that loved him and that will always be proud of him?

But in some way, all of us in northern Ontario were part of Leo's family. He looked after us, he fought for us and set a remarkable example for all of us who followed him. There is probably no really proper way to honour the legacy of a man like Leo Bernier, but he meant so much to us that I believe we must find a way to mark his

passing so that no one will ever forget the extraordinary work he did on behalf of all northerners.

So I'm pleased to tell you that we are in the process of moving forward with plans to rename the stretch of Highway 664 between his birthplace of Sioux Lookout and his beloved community of Hudson the Leo Bernier Highway.

This will be a small gesture, but one that will be forever etched in the hearts and souls of all northerners that this very special man was once and will always remain an incredibly important part of our lives.

On behalf of Premier McGuinty and the entire Liberal caucus, I offer our condolences to the Bernier family and to Leo's close friends who have joined us here today. You honour us with your presence.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's an honour to bring a few words in tribute to Leo Bernier to his family on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus. Leo Bernier was a giant of a man, both figuratively and literally: 6 feet, 4 inches tall, a booming voice and a larger-than-life presence that befit the vast expanse of his riding and the province he proudly called home. He was the big man from the little town of Hudson. Befitting the big man from Hudson, my colleague from Thunder Bay knows all kinds of stories about the legend of Leo Bernier. Let me share one with you.

There is a story about his first election night back in 1966 in Red Lake, a town about 200 kilometres northeast of Kenora. During the party, Leo found out that beer in Red Lake cost \$1.25 more than it did in Kenora on account of the distance on the Trans-Canada Highway. He later found out that Cochrane had the exact same serious problem. "It irritated me," Leo Bernier later told a reporter. "Just because people lived in Red Lake or Cochrane, they had to pay over \$1 more for beer." As a new member, he took up the issue for his northern constituents and got the liquor board to make the prices more equitable right across northern Ontario.

So began Leo Bernier's trek, standing up for northern Ontario families with a good dose of what makes good politics. That trek lasted 21 years here at Queen's Park, 14 of them in cabinet, serving three different Premiers. He served as Minister of Lands and Forests, later restructured as the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Then came that very proud moment in Leo's career when, in 1977, former Premier Bill Davis appointed Leo Bernier the first ever Minister of Northern Affairs. In short, it was a ministry made for Leo Bernier. It was the perfect fit and gave the province a powerful northern voice. Leo went to work right away and brought considerable energy to bear and the full force of his personality. A year later, he signed a deal with the federal government for improved access to northern forest resources to help create jobs.

Fittingly, Leo gave a statement on northern affairs in 1979. Very suitable for the king of the north, it was almost his own northern speech from the throne. It included new highways for the north, a geological survey as the basis for planning and development that led to the

creation of new mines, an agricultural study on northern crop potential, and proposals for a local services board to arrange for services including fire protection and garbage collection in unincorporated areas.

Later, Leo awarded contracts for air ambulance services in Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Timmins and Sioux Lookout. He signed NORDA with the federal government, providing incentives for small-scale projects in agriculture, tourism, natural resources, business and industry. Then he gave Ontario its mineral emblem, the amethyst. Then, maybe, Leo actually took a day off.

After he left public life in 1987, he continued to serve the north as chairman of FedNor, the federal economic development initiative for northern Ontario. He later became a member of the Ontario Tourism Council, advocating for the economic benefits of tourism.

Even though he was no longer in public life, he was still very much a part of the PC team. I became Minister of Northern Development and Mines almost 15 years after Leo Bernier had the same post. Yet there was scarcely a corner of the province, or the ministry, where I wasn't left with the king of the north's indelible impression. He was a great source of advice and counsel for me personally on northern issues, on tourism, on how to be a minister and on how to be a leader.

He said his top advice to elected members was that we should travel right across the province and meet the actual people paying the bills, talk to them, get to know their issues and fight for what they think is important. I saw the results of Leo's work in person many times.

1540

I'll tell you one quick story. About 10 years ago, John Baird and I were on hand for the dedication of Bernier Drive on the lakeshore in Kenora. It was moving to see the respect Leo commanded and how he was still able, despite being out of office for a number of years, to greet people by their first names, to ask about their kids and the grandkids and to pass on regards to somebody's mom or dad. Many of the responses he got back were asking him to get back into politics, to go at Howard Hampton one last time. Nearly 15 years had passed, but his impression on the north remains strong.

Leo left us this summer to join Marjorie, his wife of 60 years, who passed away the previous January. I want to take a moment to say to all the family gathered here today, Leo's children, grandchildren, close friends and the political staff who were at his side for so many years, thank you for sharing Leo with us. You should be justifiably proud of his enormous legacy.

There was a news story back in 1982, when Leo told the reporter that instead of being stuck in Queen's Park hanging out in the minister's office, he would rather be flying his plane above northern Ontario and seeing what was really going on. Well, friends, there's no doubt in my mind that Leo, now with Marjorie, is watching over that very beautiful and special part of the province as we speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable members for their tributes and very much

thank the family, the friends and the former staffers who have joined us here at the Ontario Legislature today. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, we certainly offer our condolences to the family. As well, I assure you that we will provide you with copies of Hansard and a DVD of today's proceedings so that you will have a permanent record of the tribute to the king of the north.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'ADOPTION

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It is a pleasure to rise today to recognize November as Adoption Awareness Month. This month, we thank the thousands of families across Ontario who have opened their hearts and homes to children who need a family.

J'ai le plaisir aujourd'hui, devant cette Assemblée, de reconnaître en ce mois de novembre le Mois de la sensibilisation à l'adoption. Ce mois, nous remercions les milliers de familles, aux quatre coins de l'Ontario, qui ont ouvert leur cœur et leur foyer aux enfants qui avaient besoin d'une famille.

These moms and dads, grandmothers and grandfathers, brothers and sisters are providing what many of us so often take for granted: a loving family that is there for us through life's many challenges and blessings.

This month, and year-round, we also thank all those who work every day to help find permanent, loving homes for children and youth in the care of children's aid societies. Because of these dedicated professionals, children and youth are finding safe, secure places they can call home every day.

This month we raise awareness about the many positive benefits adoption can bring to individuals and families who may never have considered it before. Adoption can be an incredibly rewarding experience for both the child being adopted and the family opening their hearts and homes.

As we speak, many of the children in the care of children's aid societies are eligible for adoption. Some are toddlers; some are older. Some are siblings; some are only children. Some have no identified special needs and some need special supports. Every child is unique. What they all have in common is that they will thrive with the right family in the right environment.

En tant que ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, j'ai eu le privilège d'avoir écouté un grand nombre d'enfants et de jeunes dont nous avons la charge et qui formulaient leur rêve de trouver une famille.

I have been privileged in my role as Minister of Children and Youth Services to have listened to many of our children and youth in care as they talked about their dreams of finding a family.

Today, there are many options for kids to find permanent, safe, loving homes that will lead to better outcomes. Adoption is perhaps the most well known; legal custody is another option. It allows a child to be raised in a new permanent family while maintaining a connection with their birth families. Another possibility is for a child to live with family members.

The key, however, is permanence. That's why our government has focused on permanent, loving homes for children since 2006. We believed and still do that this is the very best option for them to reach their full potential.

In 2009-10, about 1,000 children and youth were placed for adoption, an increase of 21% over 2008-09. While the number is promising, there is still more work to do. In the aboriginal community especially we have to do more to keep aboriginal families together or place children in traditional customary care in their community so they can remain connected to their culture and traditions.

Work is being done across the province and innovation is happening. Just recently, I visited the Kawartha-Haliburton CAS, where I met a woman who knew all about the range of options available because she had 12 children: four birth children, four foster children, two adopted children and two she had legal custody over. I also recently met many prospective parents and adoption workers from across Ontario at the Ontario Adoption Resource Exchange Conference. They all had one goal: to try to find permanent homes for children in care.

Many CASs across Ontario are making changes—from special committees to promoting adoption to foster parents—to see that more children and youth find permanent homes. Par suite de ces changements et grâce aux efforts déployés par les sociétés d'aide à l'enfance, nous réalisons des progrès. Because of these changes and the hard work of children's aid societies, we are making progress. Fewer kids are coming into care and more are finding permanent homes. But there is more to do.

We all want better outcomes for children in our care and more kids in safe, loving, permanent homes. Let that goal guide us this month and throughout the year ahead as we work to open a world of possibility to more and more children.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION À L'INTIMIDATION ET DE LA PRÉVENTION

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I rise in the House today to mark Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. There are approximately two million students in our publicly funded education system, and each of them deserves the opportunity to learn in a safe and inclusive environment.

L'intimidation prend des formes diverses dont beaucoup sont dévastatrices. Bullying can be physical, verbal or social in nature. It can also be Internet-based. Cyber-bullying is when students are subjected to taunts

and hurtful comments wherever there is a computer in the room—including their own at home.

To say that bullying can be eliminated as a result of stricter punishment is simply unrealistic. The importance of bullying awareness and prevention requires more from us than empty promises. It is an opportunity to speak up and speak out, to talk to students, teachers, parents and, in fact, the community, and to make a change by taking action. This week is a time for all of us to turn up the volume and make it clear that bullying is not acceptable in any form.

C'est pourquoi notre gouvernement est fier d'avoir pris des mesures décisives et concrètes afin de soutenir la prévention de l'intimidation et de favoriser la sécurité dans les écoles de l'Ontario. Since 2004, we have supported safe schools initiatives that create safe and inclusive school environments. We asked the safe schools action team to look into bullying and harassment and respond with recommendations—and we have responded to those recommendations. We made it mandatory for principals to consider suspension for acts of bullying. We partnered with the Kids Help Phone to support over 50,000 students who have been bullied. We passed the Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act, which is the first legislation of its kind in Canada. It requires all board employees to report incidents of bullying to the principals. It also requires principals to contact the parents of victims.

1550

Just yesterday, with our partners in community safety and correctional services, we announced the new safe schools grant, which will help police and local schools work together to reduce violence and bullying.

Earlier today we announced the Premier's Safe Schools Awards, which will recognize exceptional work in fostering a safe and inclusive school environment. Notre stratégie pour la sécurité dans les écoles est une approche qui traite des raisons complexes de l'intimidation et prévoit des conséquences sévères pour les élèves qui commettent des actes d'intimidation. That is why, while suspension must always be considered for those who bully, we also offer supports for students, including learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour while helping students make the right choices.

We truly are proud of our students and what we have done to make Ontario schools safer, but we recognize there is more to do. There will always be more to do to ensure students have a safe and supportive learning environment that helps them realize their full potential. Effective bullying prevention requires a comprehensive, community-based approach that is sustainable throughout the year. So I challenge schools to take this opportunity during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to launch programs and initiatives that support a safe and welcoming school environment year-round.

While we still have more work to do to combat bullying in our school system, let's keep in mind the significant progress that has been made to date. I do want to thank everyone in the education community for their

hard work and dedication to making Ontario schools safer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by ministries? Responses?

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize November as Adoption Awareness Month. I'd like to acknowledge the commitment that families make when adopting a child. Adoption is an integral part of ensuring a secure and stable life for a child. The impact that finding a forever family has on a child is life-changing.

I'd like to share one story, of Will and Kate from my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, who knew that becoming adoptive parents was the route they wanted to take to make their family complete. They found adopting to be an extremely rewarding decision. Now they have two wonderful children, Chas and Tristan, and have found their forever family. To quote their son Chas, "Without a family, you don't feel loved, and when you don't feel loved you don't have opportunities."

However, adopting a child does not come without its challenges. Families need to bond together, and it can be tough, as many children come from the foster care system, bounced around from home to home. Will and Kate shared their story as part of this month's awareness campaign to dispel some of the stereotypes around adoption. Kate said that many people had the idea that children who have been in care have been irreparably harmed and are damaged goods. But they're just kids who have had some bad luck, and with a loving family they can thrive and flourish.

While there have been many successful child-and-family pairings here in Ontario, there are still many more children looking for a family of their own. I want to recognize the Ottawa children's aid society, who last year launched Canada's first Heart Gallery pilot project, an initiative aimed at finding families for children with special needs, sibling groups, and older youth. Of the 18 children who have participated so far, 16 have been matched or placed with adoptive families. Adoptive families, social workers and children's aid societies should be commended for raising awareness on this issue and for wanting to provide children with a better quality of life.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to speak today on behalf of the official opposition and respond to the minister's statement concerning Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

I would like to begin by commending the member for Kitchener-Waterloo for her steadfast commitment to protecting children from bullying and harassment. This

whole thing was Elizabeth Witmer's idea. She deserves the credit. Everyone in this House should know that it was because of her hard work and dedication that Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week became officially recognized in Ontario. I congratulate her for committing herself to ensuring that we provide safe school environments for our children. They deserve nothing less.

I know that the member for Kitchener-Waterloo has worked very closely and very diligently with numerous anti-bullying organizations and concerned parents. The member has mentioned many times that, in her capacity as critic for education, she felt it was imperative that something be done to raise awareness and to call attention to this serious and increasingly prevalent issue. She was approached in the autumn of 2009 by desperate parents and teachers who were extremely concerned about the many ways bullying was affecting their children and students. They witnessed the immense impact that repeated and often relentless bullying was having on their children, families, classrooms and school communities.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo listened to these parents, teachers and students. She heard their concerns and frustrations, and she decided that something had to be done. For her, platitudes were simply not good enough. Fortunately, this House passed her resolution unanimously.

This initiative has provided Ontario families and educators with a simple but enormously effective means to prevent and deter bullying. In its most basic form, this week is about educating parents, students, teachers and administrators about bullying, its root causes, its consequences and how to prevent and deter it.

Unfortunately, this government continues with its inadequate response to school safety. Despite the claims of the minister and the Premier, it's clear the government has not given bullying the necessary consideration and attention that it deserves. The government refuses to acknowledge that bullying requires much more than Band-Aid solutions.

Our safe schools stakeholders continually express their dissatisfaction with the weakness of this government's safe schools legislation. They recognize that we need to do more. I know that Elizabeth Witmer is determined to ensure that Ontario's students and families are protected from bullying.

In closing, we would like to commend the many dedicated parents, teachers and students who are working every day to eliminate bullying.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy, as the education critic for the NDP, to make some comments on Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. I want to acknowledge straight off the work that teachers are doing, that some parents are doing, that some students are doing and even the efforts of the minister from time to time, on the whole

issue of anti-bullying initiatives. I have to say, the initiatives are few and far between. Some are helpful, such as the mandatory reporting of bullying incidents. That's all that the bill she has introduced does, but it's better than a kick in the teeth, I would say. So that is a good thing.

But I've got to tell you, we have to do a little more, Minister. The whole idea of giving a Premier's award for anti-bullying practices—please. What teachers need is real help in the classroom. There are experts who deal with anti-bullying initiatives. They know what needs to be done, but teachers alone can't do it. And we know boards don't know what to do because they don't have the money to bring in the experts.

Rather than an award about what teachers are doing on their own or what boards might be doing on their own with whatever scraps of dollars they can find, the province needs to be a leader. Rather than saying, "I challenge schools to take the opportunity during Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to launch programs and initiatives," I say to the minister, give them the help that they desperately need to be able to do that job. Don't challenge them on their own, and don't challenge boards to do something that they would love to do but do not have the money to bring in the experts to provide the advice about what initiatives could be brought into the school so they could do this job well. That's what they need. I acknowledge all the work that individuals are doing. I even acknowledge some of the little efforts the minister is making. Surely we can do more.

I've called for Ombudsman oversight over these matters. I think there's a whole lot of bullying going on and a whole lot of sexual violence from students to other students that's going on. I believe that needs to be exposed in a way that only the Ombudsman could give us a picture of, in terms of what is going on and what help we could give to some of those victims who have been abused, because the system—in the cases that I've heard—has failed them badly. Ombudsman oversight wouldn't be so bad.

Some leadership from the minister about some monies that could be given so teachers could do a better job would be useful. Their lives would be improved, and the learning environment would be improved in the process.

1600

ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: I wish to preface my remarks on adoption by saying that I was, for many years, a member of the children's aid society of Toronto, and I saw first-hand how children pined for and how they needed adoption and stability in their homes.

I listened to what the minister had to say, but I am reminded of what happened on November 3. A delegation came to this very Legislature, imploring the government to implement an action plan on adoption because that delegation did not feel that we were doing enough. They were led by Pat Convery, executive director of the

Adoption Council of Ontario; Aleisha Deece-Cassidy, a 14-year-old former crown ward of Ontario; and William Falk, a member of the government of Ontario expert panel on infertility and adoption. The title of their press release, I think, said it all: "Ontario's 9,300 Crown Ward Children Left by McGuinty Government to Grow Up in Foster Care."

They talked at great length about the thousands of kids who've been permanently removed from their parents' homes, usually because of neglect and abuse, and are now wards of the province. They said that many of them could and should be adopted, but the public adoption system in Ontario is broken. They went on to state that the government hasn't implemented a single recommendation from the August 2009 report of the government-appointed expert panel on infertility and adoption, chaired by David Johnston, that eminent Canadian who is now Canada's Governor General.

The recommendations, for the record, included creating a provincial adoption agency, developing tools to manage the adoption system, providing adequate funding that supports the realities of adoption, supporting assisted reproduction rights, and raising awareness about family-building options in Ontario.

If the government was truly serious, they'd be acting on that.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Walmart wants to install an 80-foot, 20-kilowatt wind turbine in a low-wind urban area of Burlington, Ontario, very close to residences; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows this type of project to bypass municipal approvals and meaningful public input;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment refuse a permit for Walmart's turbine and revise the Green Energy Act to allow public input and municipal approvals on all renewable energy projects."

Interjections.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I agree with this petition, regardless of the heckling from the other side. I will sign this petition and give it to page Donna.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have one of the shortest petitions I've ever seen. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

It's signed by hundreds of people. I'm in agreement and will send this down with page Jake.

WEARING OF HELMETS

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: This is a petition of over 1,300 people collected by a young skier who was in an accident.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That we make it a mandatory rule on all ski hills in Ontario that participants in any downhill activity must wear a helmet and have it done up properly."

I'll affix my signature to that.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition in support of Bill 100. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

It's signed by a number of my constituents, and I support it too.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric

of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Sarah.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Toby Barrett: "Haldimand-Norfolk Needs an OSPCA Chapter:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the establishment of a local Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) could help deal with the brutality and neglect of horses and other large animals; and

"Whereas the Ontario government could provide training for the Ontario Provincial Police to deal with animal abuse issues;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the Ontario government request the establishment of an OSPCA chapter in Haldimand-Norfolk to provide the two counties with support in cases of animal abuse and neglect."

I agree with the petition and affix my signature to it.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by Mrs. Rona Ramsey from the Sudbury MS Society, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS will have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas, despite numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it, and ask page Donna to bring it to the clerks' table.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment, to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Drew.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sarah to bring it to the clerks.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a

well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Tony.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

As I agree with this, I've affixed my signature and given it to page Drew.

HIGHWAY 15

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the point that Highway 15 intersects with County Road 42 has been considered by many to be a hazardous intersection, particularly when local residents travel over the provincial highway; and

"Whereas in 2007 the Ministry of Transportation staff presented design plans which showed a dramatic reduction in the curvature of this portion of Highway 15, which would have considerably improved the level of visibility and safety to our residents crossing over Highway 15; and

"Whereas in late 2008/early 2009, the Ministry of Transportation revised the 2007 design plans for this intersection, which would only minimally improve the visibility and safety of this intersection but would result

in a significant reduction in the amount of funds expended by the province of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Transportation be respectfully requested to direct staff to recommend the 2007 design plan for the intersection of Highway 15 and County Road 42."

I certainly agree with this petition. It's been certified by the table. I'll affix my signature and send it with page Sarah.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I again want to thank Amy Preston from Brockville, who has been a great advocate for CCSVI research. I have a petition that she's provided me to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's been certified by the table. It reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I certainly agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Sarah.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Mr. Wilkinson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters / Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Debate?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm honoured to rise today to begin third reading debate on the McGuinty government's proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. Today I'll be sharing my time with my

parliamentary assistant, Dr. Helena Jaczek, the MPP for Oak Ridges–Markham, who has carried this bill through first and second reading and through clause-by-clause consideration. I want to personally thank her for her hard work, and I want to publicly acknowledge my predecessor Minister Gerretsen for introducing Bill 72. It is an honour to carry on the work that he started.

This act is about valuing our water. This is about recognizing what it means to our future, to our children and our grandchildren. It's about recognizing what we have, this tremendous resource, the envy of the world. This is about how changing our view of water and how we use it will lead to a better future. We need to value our water by recognizing how vital it is to our health and our communities; by recognizing the immense opportunities it holds for us; by not wasting it. We have a responsibility to the families of Ontario, to our children and our grandchildren, to protect and safeguard this invaluable legacy and the opportunities that can lift them up and carry them forward. We must not waste this opportunity or squander our natural capital. That's what this government understands, and that is exactly what we've been doing in regard to water opportunities these past seven years. This is by no means a new direction for our government. For the past seven years, our government has made protecting our water a key priority. We passed the Clean Water Act, the Safeguarding and Sustaining Ontario's Water Act and the Lake Simcoe Protection Act. It's time, in our opinion, to take the next logical step by passing the proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act so we can protect what we have and seize this opportunity to become a North American leader in water conservation and management.

We have already banned the bulk export of water, but we will and we must export our expertise to a thirsty world. This is not about privatizing our water systems. We remain committed to public ownership. The purpose of this act has nothing to do with the privatization of publicly owned water systems. Instead, it would help us safeguard our water while promoting our water treatment and conservation technology to the world.

As I said, we live in a thirsty world. Demand for water is only going to grow, and in the next 20 years, experts predict a 40% gap between global supply and demand. We need to protect our water, conserve what we have and transfer the skills and practices we've developed to ensure others can do the same around the world. That is in our own best interests.

A number of Ontario municipalities have also identified water and waste water systems as significant energy consumers, reportedly accounting for between 25% to 60% of their electricity bills. That cost is passed on through property taxes. So if passed, this act would help municipalities by encouraging water conservation planning as part of municipal water sustainability plans.

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Already, many Ontario municipalities are showing leadership in water conservation. Through their newly developed water efficiency plan, the city of Toronto is

striving to ensure that their water system can meet the needs of a growing city. The plan, to be implemented over the next 10 years, would reduce current water use, but accommodate population and employment growth at one third the cost of expanding infrastructure. Another example is the city of Guelph, which has implemented a water conservation and efficiency program, including incentives such as toilet rebate programs, rain barrel programs and public education. Their investment in water conservation since 2006 has resulted in water savings worth up to \$7.3 million in the avoided cost of a new water supply.

We heard the good advice of Ecojustice Canada and the Canadian Environmental Law Association. This bill will encourage municipalities and public agencies to consider water reuse, stormwater harvesting and the promotion of green leafy infrastructure in a whole new way. We also listened to our municipal stakeholders, like the cities of London, Hamilton and Toronto, about the need to provide greater flexibility in the phasing in of municipal water sustainability plans. We've received support from AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, for our proposal to better integrate municipal water, waste water and stormwater planning in Bill 72. I believe we have reached the right balance, and I know AMO looks forward to working with us as the regulations are developed.

We are also doing this for Ontario's businesses. Our work on water supports the green economy and a high quality of life. The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would create more jobs in the growing global market for clean water technology and would support business development in our province. Already, Ontario is home to many water technology leaders. Ontario companies currently employ some 22,000 people in good, high-paying jobs in areas such as water conservation and nanotechnology, and these companies are doing great things. For example, in Whitby, Real Tech Inc. is producing technologies used to monitor water quality in real time. Their innovation led to an award from the American Water Works Association. In Hamilton, a company called Hydromantis is producing software systems used to optimize facility designs, train operators and evaluate potential emissions during waste water collection and treatment. Echologics found a leak in an Ottawa water pipe that had been losing around 900 litres per minute for at least five years, at a cost of some \$100,000 a year.

It's these companies that are already making a difference in treating and protecting our water resources. Imagine the possibilities if we bring Ontario water tech and water services companies together to help them reach the global marketplace.

If passed, this act would enable the creation of the Water Technology Acceleration Project, or WaterTAP. My ministry is eager to work closely with our sister Ministry of Research and Innovation. This technology hub would bring industry, academia and government together to encourage the development and commercialization of new water technology.

Through consultation and in committee, we heard from the Ontario Environment Industry Association and Conservation Ontario. Both of these organizations highlighted that not just technologies, but also services, in the water sector were critical to providing leading-edge, innovative water solutions. We listened to these important partners and clarified that the scope of WaterTAP will be broad enough to assist and support the capacity of Ontario's water, waste water and stormwater sectors, including the very important service dimension.

We also see many opportunities to work together with our aboriginal communities, who have articulated their powerful relationship to water. WaterTAP is aimed at assisting in the development of Ontario's water and waste water sectors, including water professionals who work in and serve aboriginal communities.

We also want to help Ontarians understand and value this incredible resource. We know we can make great strides in reducing residential water usage. All Ontarians have a role to play in understanding how to use our water more wisely. Here in the 21st century, we need to recognize that we can no longer afford to waste anything. Conservation must become the new norm. By saving water, we save energy and protect our resources for our children and our grandchildren. By encouraging water efficiency and conservation by our municipalities and by people in their own homes and in their businesses, we will help support the growth of the clean water sector and create good jobs for Ontarians in the new green economy.

There is a need to act. I believe this is the time to act, to value our water, to seize this opportunity. That is why we need to pass Bill 72, and I ask all members from all sides of the House to support the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I yield my time to my parliamentary assistant.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Today, I'm proud to join Minister Wilkinson for third reading debate and to speak in support of our government's proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

Bill 72 is yet another step in a series of positive actions our government has taken to safeguard our water resources. From our Clean Water Act to our amendments to the Ontario Water Resources Act to our Lake Simcoe Protection Act, we have made healthy, sustainable water a key priority.

We also made commitments under the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin Sustainable Water Resources Agreement in 2005. Under this agreement, Ontario, Quebec, and the eight US Great Lakes states committed to develop and implement water conservation and efficiency programs to ensure long-term sustainable water use and protect the Great Lakes.

The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would help fulfill Ontario's commitment under this agreement by enabling the following activities:

setting aspirational conservation targets to encourage Ontarians to use water more wisely; furthering government leadership in water conservation; and requiring water sustainability planning and encouraging conservation by municipalities.

As has already been stated by Premier McGuinty and Minister Wilkinson, this is not about selling water. We have banned bulk water exports out of Ontario's three water basins. What the proposed act would do, if passed, is to deliver three key outcomes. It would help make Ontario a North American leader in the development and sale of technologies for water conservation and water treatment. It would encourage sustainable infrastructure and conservation planning, including using innovative technologies to solve water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure challenges. And it would encourage Ontarians to use water more efficiently. I'd like to speak to this third point in some greater detail.

We know that Ontarians use, on average, 267 litres of water a day, far more than comparable countries like Germany or the UK, where people use, on average, 150 litres per day. We also believe we use far less than we actually do. Half of Canadians think fresh water is our country's most important natural resource, according to the recent Unilever/RBC water survey of 2010, and yet we are among the highest water users in the world.

We need to take steps to conserve our water to ensure we have enough now and well into the future, especially as pressures from climate change, population growth and urbanization keep increasing. Using water efficiently is one of the most cost-effective ways to address water and waste water needs.

Our proposed act, if passed, would help encourage efforts that significantly reduce residential water use. It would give the government the authority to request standardized information on water bills to help people understand how much water they use and allow them to track their progress as they reduce their use.

We are also proposing, for example, water efficiency standards for more consumer products, such as shower heads, to help people use less water and save money.

The residential sector accounts for 40% of all energy used in Ontario, and heating water is typically the second-largest consumer of energy in buildings. Improved water efficiency will save water and energy well into the future.

A number of Ontario municipalities have identified water and waste water facilities as significant energy consumers, reportedly accounting for between 25% and 60% of their respective municipal electricity bills.

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So, one of the key goals of our proposed act would be to encourage the use of innovative water technologies and services to reduce the use of water. Something many people don't realize is that much of the cost of providing clean water and treating waste water is the cost of energy associated with these activities. The new technology is often much more efficient, using much less water and energy to run the same systems, potentially providing

cost savings to municipalities, and ultimately to consumers.

Already, many Ontario municipalities are showing leadership in water conservation. They've seen how investing in water conservation and innovative technologies can avoid significant expenditures on infrastructure. My riding of Oak Ridges–Markham is situated in York region, which has been doing a great deal of work in this area. In their Water for Tomorrow program, they found that water efficiency measures represent the cheapest source of water supply for the region, at about 16% of the average cost region-wide, to expand water and waste water infrastructure. The proposed act would support municipalities by encouraging them to identify new opportunities for innovative and cost-effective Ontario technologies that would help solve water, waste water and stormwater infrastructure challenges. Every drop of water we save is water we don't need to pump or treat.

Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple, once stated, "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower," and this is definitely true for Ontario today. We're leading the way in environmental action and protection. The Green Energy Act is attracting new investment in the renewable energy sector, creating well-paying jobs, helping us clean our air and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions from dirty coal. It is making Ontario a green energy leader in North America and is a critical part of our Open Ontario plan. This plan will strengthen our economy, support new businesses and create more jobs for our families. It will make Ontario open for opportunities in our ever-evolving world.

Our proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act is also a key pillar of our Open Ontario plan, and would lead to investment, new products and innovation. It would bring together the best minds from the water industry and the research community. It would connect our cutting-edge companies with the institutions best equipped to find solutions to enhance competitiveness, and would help us to better align research and development funding with industry needs. Already, the water innovations coming out of Ontario are helping Ontarians—from businesses to municipalities to aboriginal communities—manage their water resources. The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would also help us showcase our ingenuity to the world, and would propel our innovative water technologies to the global marketplace. We want to be prepared to capitalize on the \$400-billion global clean water industry that currently exists, a sector that is doubling every five to six years. Passing this bill would leave us in a state of readiness.

While North America's water needs are expected to increase over the next five years, we know that higher growth opportunities exist in the East Asia and Pacific regions, with China and India targeted as specific emerging markets. Economies that develop the technological solutions to conserve more water or purify water more efficiently will have a tremendous com-

petitive advantage in the coming years. That's an edge we've been honing in Ontario. We are leading through our actions, our ability to look to the future and our willingness to share our expertise with others.

It makes sense for Ontario to lead in this area. We have a well-educated workforce, we are known for excellence in research and private sector technology, and we benefit from our province's geographic advantage. Many of Ontario's businesses are already contributing world-class water technology to other jurisdictions. We are working on issues surrounding water sustainability, focusing on climate change, watershed planning, and management and infrastructure maintenance and replacement.

The creation of WaterTAP, the Water Technologies Acceleration Project, through the proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, would enable our leaders to come together to promote water technologies and services for use at home and abroad. The world needs Ontario's leadership, and we can teach the world how to make water safer. This is one of the most pressing needs in the developing world, and Ontario can help provide solutions that would save lives and provide better access to clean water for people in regions that suffer from water scarcity.

The proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would also attract economic development and create good jobs, the kinds of jobs we want for our children and grandchildren. It would encourage investment and opportunity for the start-up of new companies in Ontario and would help lead to the expansion of our provincial water expertise. New jobs would be created in the growing global market for clean water technology, working through our partners: industry, universities, colleges and entrepreneurs.

We understand that we cannot have a strong 21st century economy without having a sustainable economy. That's why the pillars under this bill would work to strengthen the economy and protect our environment at the same time. Innovation, the sharing of environmental experience, and leadership are all traits Ontario can share with the world. As stewards of one of the world's largest sources of fresh water, we also have an opportunity to demonstrate our innovation and leadership when it comes to protecting and conserving our water supply. If we come together, Ontario can be at the forefront when it comes to water protection.

Around the globe, one in eight people lacks access to clean water. Close to half of the world's population, around 46%, do not have running water in their homes. In the next 15 years, 1.8 billion people will live in regions where water scarcity is a reality.

This is a worldwide health and environmental concern. Ontario's expertise can help. Our proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act would open Ontario to new ideas, growth, and innovation. It would open up new opportunities for good jobs for our people. It would strengthen our communities by helping us conserve water and energy. We can build a strong,

successful water technology sector here that would be able to provide solutions to some of the world's greatest challenges.

For all these reasons I have stated, I strongly support our proposed act, and I urge all my colleagues to join me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the speeches from the two members of the Ontario government. They mentioned some of the legislation that they have passed over the last seven years—the Lake Simcoe act, some of the water-related legislation. It's interesting: They did not mention the Adams Mine Lake Act. I don't know why that legislation would not be included amongst the other water-related bills. Maybe we'll find out during the course of debate.

I can appreciate the government members crowing a bit about legislation that they have passed over the past seven years. Actually, there was a number of bills that were not mentioned: the pesticides legislation, the toxics reduction legislation. I'm not sure if the spills bill was mentioned. Maybe it was.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Was the spills bill mentioned? Maybe no one can remember.

But anyway, you know, it kind of impresses on me the fact that when you have a string of probably eight pieces of environmental legislation—this is probably number eight, as I recall; I count the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act as number one—there's a cumulative effect. As we know, with every piece of legislation that is passed come the regulations, and with the regulations come a myriad of bureaucratic forms, red tape, rules, regulations, and when you start adding it up—and I know much of this debate focuses on one bill at a time—it can become onerous, it can suffocate, and in many ways can be counterproductive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the comments of the parliamentary assistant about this water bill, and I caught some of what the minister himself had to say at the beginning of his presentation.

There's no doubt that investment in water conservation technology makes a lot of sense. Frankly, if we in Ontario had an energy conservation plan for electricity and for gas, if we had a commitment to invest in conservation in those areas, we could, in fact, take great strides. But the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, who is often quoted in question period by the government, actually says that you do not have a plan.

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Mr. Khalil Ramal: We do.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You do not have a plan. Read the Environmental Commissioner's report. Take a look at the simple reality. You do not have one. You don't have a climate change plan that will make the targets that you have already set—your own plan. When you do your own analysis and your own report says that you'll only

meet 70% of your target, and a big chunk of that is dependent on cap and trade coming out of the federal government, and that, in turn, coming out of the United States—not to be seen.

I think that a good water conservation bill would make a lot of sense. I think a commitment by a government that mirrored even the California commitment of a 20% reduction in water consumption would be very good. But I'm quite worried that having gone through this particular show, this particular performance, in the past, we will hear all the right words about the technological direction that we have to take. What we won't see, ultimately, even with a bill passed and regulations put in place, will be the technologies, the plans and the targets that are needed to change our economy and to provide water and waste water services at an affordable cost. That's the concern.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to add my comments to the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's on this very, very important piece of legislation.

Some of the members from the opposition have mentioned, how can you argue against legislation to protect our water? Rightfully so. We're very, very fortunate in this province to hold one of the largest fresh bodies of water anywhere in the world, and we need to do everything we can—

Mr. Khalil Ramal: To protect it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: —to protect it.

We took a number of initiatives. This is another piece of legislation to move forward that not only is here to try to protect our water resources, but also the expertise that we have in the way of maintaining and protecting clean water. Those technologies, I think, are a huge asset that we can use, frankly, as an export—the technology, not the water—to help other parts of the world that don't have the types of resources that we have. We've all seen some of those news reports from those less fortunate areas of the world where water is a huge commodity. Frankly, I'm not sure how those people survive.

As we debate this bill, we have support from a number of municipalities, from AMO and from industry, because this is really a fairly comprehensive piece of legislation when it comes to that particular resource.

We did things in the past to stop the sale of bulk water, to try to protect it. We banned expanding the use of pesticides so that they would not damage our clean water resources.

I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? Response? The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I certainly want to thank my colleagues in this House for their comments.

Thank you to the member for Haldimand—Norfolk for reminding us about the activist approach our government has taken to protecting the environment. Yes, indeed, we really didn't have sufficient time to detail all that the

McGuinty government has done in terms of environmental protection.

To the member from Toronto—Danforth, you are always someone who is very ambitious in the goals that you wish to see our government achieve and the targets that you promote. It's certainly good to have those comments. We had public hearings. We heard from many, many groups, and I think what we heard was that we needed to have a balanced approach. Certainly there's an understanding that water conservation is essential. There is the requirement and the interest of industry to see their businesses expand. But we have to take a prudent, balanced approach as we move forward, and I think that that's exactly what this bill does.

The member for Northumberland—Quinte West did remind us a little bit about the involvement that municipalities have had in the whole consultation around this bill. We certainly heard some very inspiring stories, especially the city of Guelph, the region of York, the city of Toronto and the region of Durham in terms of the innovative approaches they've taken to water conservation and what they see as their very substantial savings in terms of their investment in conservation.

We are convinced that this is an excellent—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 72. I really should say thank you to the people of Ontario for all of us to get the opportunity to address and to debate this piece of legislation, the Water Opportunities Act.

I see today is November 17, so we're six days in from Remembrance Day, and I'm sure many of us in this Legislature were given a microphone on Remembrance Day or perhaps the weekend before or even at a dinner afterwards, where we had an opportunity to remind ourselves that people did fight to the death so that we would have the opportunity to stand up here and present our views and to have some gentle criticism, as we have seen so far. As we all know, this doesn't happen in a number of other countries.

For all the fanfare, especially in the early days, with the introduction of this Water Opportunities Act, which, interestingly enough and coincidentally, was introduced right about on the 10th anniversary of Walkerton, there were some very high expectations last spring on what was coming and what this was supposed to be delivering. I'm afraid that at this stage—we're now in third reading—it has turned out to be somewhat underwhelming.

We did have a day of consultations, as we heard in the earlier debate this afternoon, and we've been left with a water bill, McGuinty's water bill, that, as I mentioned, was timed to be introduced on the 10th anniversary of Walkerton.

When you look at the legislation, there's not a lot that specifically deals with clean water. Just on that issue of timing, I would note that the timing of the committee hearings for this bill—and this is a bill that has a tremen-

dous interest and impact with respect to municipalities and their responsibilities to deliver water services.

We all, I think, perhaps—green energy was mentioned just a few minutes ago. We're all aware of the disdain that this government has shown for municipal input when it comes to green energy proposals. We have seen the McGuinty Green Energy Act do away with local decision-making powers with respect to siting or anything—

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The Minister of Agriculture just piped up. This minister would be aware of the concept of minimum distance separation with respect to siting and with respect to nutrient management. But we have none of that with respect to those 450-foot-high wind towers that one would find in the Minister of Agriculture's riding.

There was some legislation. It got rid of municipal decision-making completely. I guess we shouldn't be surprised to find that government has again moved, with this legislation, to shut down municipal voices on issues directly impacting municipal councillors and the people they represent, in this case, the delivery of water services.

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The reason I'm drawing this to the attention of the House is the scheduling of the public hearings: They were held right in the middle of the municipal elections. No municipal councillors showed up. No clerks showed up. No planning department showed up to testify. I think maybe we got an email from staff somewhere in a municipality somewhere in the province of Ontario. It raises that question: How can we purport to have a water bill that reflects the interests of Ontarians when they don't even allow their local level to have a say? This bill was amended before the newly elected councillors even had a chance to awaken from their victory celebrations.

Thankfully, following a letter to the clerk which was jointly signed by our opposition municipal affairs critic, Joyce Savoline, who is here this afternoon, and by myself, I was granted the opportunity to make this point with the following motion at the second day of committee hearings. I'd like to read that motion into the record:

"I move that the Standing Committee on General Government's deliberations on Bill 72, Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, 2010, be deferred until such time as elected municipal councils are in place and a mechanism for their input to committee deliberations is agreed upon."

In my letter I further noted the committee deliberations with respect to this legislation, again, being held during the time of Ontario's municipal elections, that the act itself impacts directly on water service providers, including municipalities, and that municipal councillors therefore would have limited ability to provide input to committee deliberations aimed at amending the bill. And this was the case: Nobody showed up.

In a final attempt to bring some sense to the proceedings, I went on to explain that, as we continued with our

deliberations and discussing amendments, the input we received from other organizations—in fact, during the hearings we did not receive any input from municipalities; it was from other organizations. I don't know whether the government has had the ability to pass that information back to the municipalities and whether municipal councillors have had the time to digest that over the past several weeks, because they have been very busy with other things.

There were municipal elections right across the province of Ontario. I know next door to my riding the Six Nations of the Grand River just completed their municipal elections. They re-elected their chief. That would have been last Saturday. Other things have been on their minds. I not only commend our municipal affairs critic, Joyce Savoline, for co-authoring that letter, but I also make reference to the member for Leeds—Grenville, MPP Steve Clark. He added—this was on committee—that during his conversations with municipal hopefuls in his area, as he said, and I quote, "Many had no idea about Bill 72."

Unfortunately, Speaker, I think you can appreciate what I'm going to say. My requests fell on deaf ears, with the government committee members refusing to take time for municipal representatives on the election trail to comment on this water bill and how it impacts them; most importantly, not so much how it impacts them but how it impacts the people that they represent. The impact is a direct impact, and you can put a dollar figure on it. This government has yet to tell us what that dollar figure is. I heard similar sentiments from Bill Murdoch, our representative for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

So despite these concerns, government committee members voted unanimously to reject any further opportunity to allow municipal input to committee deliberations over what we commonly now refer to as the McGuinty water bill. And this is so important, this opportunity. We have the opportunity, as I mentioned earlier, to debate. We have the right. We have the freedom of expression. Free speech is important, and there are subtle ways of freezing people out. As I mentioned, people have fought to their death for these freedoms. You don't impose censorship in this society. You don't impose censorship in a very subtle way. Unfortunately, it does agree—there are many ways to try and counter someone who has views with which you do not agree. There are various levels of intimidation. I feel that it's wrong. If you want to get your message out, you need to let others do the same.

A case in point: Last night, MPP Randy Hillier and myself drove down to Hamilton to hear a lecture at the Chedoke Presbyterian church. The speaker was Christie Blatchford. There were protestors in the lobby. This was on Mohawk. I know one member here would know where that church is. I guess there were maybe a dozen demonstrators in the lobby of the church as we came through. There were no problems. We were expecting problems, after what happened at the University of Waterloo, where Christie Blatchford was not allowed to

speak. To their credit, the University of Waterloo—the public relations person and their president—have made it very clear they want Christie Blatchford to return, and they will make sure that she has an opportunity to get up on the stage with no swastikas and no cries of racism.

As far as last night—it was a great evening, and with respect to the demonstrators, they were polite. As I indicated, if you want to get your message out, you need to let others get their message out as well. One message I was handed by one of the groups—it's a Six Nations solidarity group. I can read this. It's a little yellow flyer: "Hey, Christie Blatchford, do you understand that refusing to talk about legitimate land claims at the site of Douglas Creek Estates is racism?" That was the message I was given. That's their view; I disagree with that view. I invariably find out that when you—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm telling Julian Fantino what you say.

Mr. Toby Barrett: In fact, I just heard a comment from the Liberal side, and I do find that in many cases when a Liberal or a left-winger is losing an argument, they call you a racist. That's kind of how it works. Come down to Caledonia some afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk, I know it's my responsibility to keep you on the bill that we're discussing, and I know you're going to bring it back to that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to bring it back.

You know, for this reason alone, that the municipal councillors were frozen out of this process, I will not be supporting this bill. Citizen participation is very important. Community participation, community involvement, is very important. There is a myriad, a constellation, of ways on that spectrum, really that continuum, to freeze people out.

So what are we left with? After one day of committee hearings, we had some people locked out, in my view. What we have here now—it's a water bill that argues for conservation. That's a good thing. But it does little to support the key cause of water waste. It's a water bill that puts in place legislation whose goals could already have been met by previous legislation. As I recall, both government members listed very recent water legislation that they had brought in. We have legislation in place. We have institutions in place. We have the Ministry of the Environment in place, that could be doing this work, rather than perhaps looking at setting up a whole other level of bureaucracy. It's referred to as WaterTAP, a brand new agency—unelected, unaccountable. I'm sure they would probably be required to send an annual report in to the minister once a year. It may come in, say, seven months late, like the Ontario Electronic Stewardship report that we just received. There are a lot of unanswered questions.

Again, would one more piece of environmental legislation—you know, we heard some of the list already—to add to the seven pieces of environmental legislation that have previously been passed by this

government, the constellation of regulations and rules and red tape, and the costs—the costs that will be measured by business, by small business, by industry, companies that will have yet another piece of legislation with which they will have to struggle to comply.

1700

I'd like to look at the legislation with respect to some of the regulatory hoops that our industries have been forced to jump through since this government came in. I know the members tried to remember all the environmental bills that they have passed, but they missed an awful lot of them.

They didn't mention the Adams Mine Lake Act.

Bill 133—I refer to that as the spills bill. That's the Environmental Enforcement Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. We call it the spills bill. Some people call it the spill-and-bill—you send a bill.

The Clean Water Act: I think that was mentioned.

They didn't mention the Toxics Reduction Act. Toxins can have an impact on water, not only on air and land.

They did not mention the Cosmetic Pesticides Ban Act. I would remind the government members that they brought that legislation in with respect to their worry—perhaps they felt the federal government wasn't doing enough to keep pesticides out of water.

They did mention the Lake Simcoe Protection Act.

There was no mention of the cap-and-trade legislation.

Now we have the Water Opportunities Act. I just—don't ignore some of the suffocating aspects of, for example, the species-at-risk law, which would be under MNR, and of course the economic insanity of the Green Energy Act.

You start adding these up—I've only named a smattering of laws—and there is a cumulative effect when you operate in isolation, bill by bill, and there's little doubt in my mind that with each piece of additional legislation and, of course, the inherent regulations that are always sure to follow—undebated—close behind, there is a cumulative effect that piles cost on top of cost; it piles paperwork on top of paperwork, and enough red tape to suffocate industry and business alike, particularly small business. They do not have the horses to deal with the myriad of regulation that comes along with legislation like this.

With the introduction of the Water Opportunities Act, this government has now brought forward, at my count, anyway, eight such environmental acts, notorious for their associated regulation: eight successive environmental bills alone, which leads to that cumulative effect, smothers economic activity and kills jobs. Taxes kill jobs. Red tape kills jobs as well, something we have to recognize. Bureaucratic, unnecessary regulation can kill jobs; at minimum it takes the fun out of running a business or running a farm and, for many people, that's kind of the last straw to pack it in.

Now, before I dig into some of my thoughts further on this cumulative effect of the McGuinty water bill, I'd like to read something that came in very, very early when this legislation first surfaced, when this first came forward, a

submission from the Canadian petroleum producers, and I would like to quote it. They go by the handle CPPI.

"CPPI understands the government's priority for seeking to support the development of water technology. We believe existing water regulations and water management initiatives in Ontario could be used and enhanced to achieve the goals of sustainable water resources management and transparent costing and accounting of water use, and that these dimensions could avoid the need for a new water bill," in their view. But here we are debating a new water bill, Bill 72.

They went on—this is the petroleum institute—to point out their concern that "additional legislation runs the risk of creating duplication, inconsistencies, or fragmentation of water regulation and initiatives with other existing provincial water legislation. Both members of the government gave us a list of the other existing water legislation and regulations." Development and demonstration of technology does not require an act—you don't need legislation to foster technology—"and could alternatively be implemented through improvements to Ontario's public sector assets. Innovative water management technology developed for a global market could be developed using existing mechanisms, such as those managed by the Ministry of Research and Innovation or through private investments."

I think I mentioned earlier that we do have a Ministry of the Environment. It's there itself to oversee safe, clean water in Ontario. During testimony at the hearings on this legislation, the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association noted that we don't need another whole new level of bureaucracy by creating the umbrella organization of WaterTAP, Bill 72's version of a mega-LHIN. That's my concern with respect to WTAP.

So if you read this list of environmental legislation when it comes to water, there is a similarly lengthy record of water-related bills, both our government's—we passed water legislation as well—that have been brought forward over the last number of years, water legislation that was not mentioned by the government: the Nutrient Management Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act—I mentioned the so-called Adams Mine Lake Act—the spills bill, the Clean Water Act, the Lake Simcoe Protection Act, the Sustainable Water and Waste Water Systems Improvement and Maintenance Act. Add to that the water bill.

The overregulation this government has hoisted on our business, our industry and our economy really seems to have no purpose other than to ramp up the cost of doing business in Ontario, and in the end it costs all of us. It costs all of us in time, it costs all of us with respect to money and jobs, and it forces businesses to either pay up or shut down or move out. Regrettably, especially with our manufacturing industries, we have seen a number of industries choosing the latter two options of late.

It is somewhat ironic that in briefings on this government's "open for business" bill, we were told that the legislation aimed to harmonize legislation with federal,

provincial and municipal levels. I would applaud that measure if it wasn't for the fact that this government has made a practice of duplicating other government initiatives. I think of the pesticides legislation. Ottawa already had that kind of legislation. The Toxics Reduction Act: Ottawa is already looking after that. Cap and trade legislation: Why are we in Ontario doing what the federal government is in place to do? And now this water bill: Again, through debate, I would like to determine to what extent this duplicates things that the federal government is doing. The federal government also has a role with respect to water, particularly with respect to native communities.

I can tell you that on this side of the House, after seven years of cumulative legislative and regulatory impacts, I think it's time for a change. It's time for a culture change, if you will: a change in the culture of government, a change in the culture within the Ministry of the Environment itself. With some of the legislation that has been mentioned this afternoon, we saw draconian legislation that focuses on punitive measures. Invariably the legislation has a list of fines. Invariably the legislation empowers officers of the government to enter property without a warrant. No talk of incentives. It's always the stick; no talk of the carrot.

1710

This province, at present, is awash in something like 500,000 regulations. That's according to the Toronto Star. I would rarely quote the Toronto Star. I will quote, actually, Satinder Chera, Ontario director of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who says, "For too long, governments at all levels have been oblivious to the negative consequences of too much regulation on the job-creating small business sector...."

During the first-ever red tape awareness week, the CFIB released a fairly comprehensive report revealing that Ontario businesses spend nearly \$11 billion a year to comply with government regulation—\$11 billion in compliance costs. To what extent that compliance is with respect to environmental legislation—I don't have a breakdown. That's something worth looking for.

Just to continue what Satinder Chera stated: "There is a higher level of accountability when it comes to government taxation and spending policies. Not so with regulation.... Most governments still do not quantify the impact of regulation which, needless to say, has created a big accountability deficit." It also contributes to a pretty large government deficit that we're seeing today, and businesses, unable to keep up with many of the costs of red tape, close up shop for good, closing down their businesses. It's inevitable. We've lost those taxes, we've lost those jobs, and we see a further downward spiral, an economic tailspin that's been going on now since 2008, certainly down in my riding, in the Hamilton area—actually just about anywhere between Buffalo and Detroit, if you go across southern Ontario.

I find it somewhat ironic that this bill is advertised and is purported to create jobs. It doesn't speak about tax cuts. It makes no mention of the hidden costs—and there

will be costs—and yet it purports to be creating jobs. I don't think I have to tell you that this government, because it really should be drilled into them, for the results that we've seen over the last seven years—but it's a well-known and historically proven fact that increased red tape, increased fees, increased taxes kill jobs; tax cuts create jobs.

I feel the jury is out as far as whether this kind of environmental legislation, on top of all the other environmental legislation, is a job-creating program. It may create some government jobs.

As far as the cost, we couldn't get answers on the cost. I know there was a private member's bill that seemed to be the forerunner of this bill that really presented some very significant costs to people. People are going to perhaps get the same kind of shock when they open up their water bill that they're getting now with their electricity bill.

When it comes to the price tag for improving water in Ontario, the most we seem to get out of this government is that the cost savings gained by not wasting so much treated water would, over the long run, cover the cost. It's interesting that this bill and this government—they talk a game on conservation, they attempt to hit the right buttons in indicating that people in Ontario use close to double the amount of water used by Europeans, but when it comes to the biggest challenge—conservation—I don't see a lot in this legislation.

We hear the minister talking about the importance of fixing our aging and leaking water mains—and I'm sure this government has been hearing that for the last seven years—that waste something like 25% of the water that flows through them. But when it really comes down to it, I'm not sure if this legislation is going to have much impact on that. Investment money would have impact on that.

It does allow for regulation requiring municipalities to develop water conservation plans. But the bill is silent on where the billions of dollars would be raised to replace or upgrade the tens of thousands of miles of water pipes. So this is mandated for municipalities. They've just come out of their municipal elections. I don't know whether they know about this or not.

Having somewhat of a plan, that's all well and good, but if nobody is prepared to foot the bill, let alone tell us how much the bill is—you know, the stimulus funding announcements are pretty well over with. That transfer of federal and provincial money to prop up the municipalities to maintain municipal government jobs, that era is pretty well over. I have yet to see evidence of where there were many real jobs created by the stimulus funding. Arenas were built and some roads were paved, but we're not seeing it reflected in employment figures, certainly not in the province of Ontario.

If nobody is prepared to foot the bill, this legislation is really somewhat of a paper tiger. Again, if the municipalities are tasked with preparing plans, plans on costing—costly plans, if you will—the government will see to it that it's you and I who will be putting up the money for

that, those of us in the province of Ontario who use water. That's just about all of us. If that's the case, I question the government's approach of hiding behind orders for municipal plans and such instead of simply admitting the truth: that we want our infrastructure improved. If conservation is important to government, as this government would have us believe, then we will be paying a price. We will be the ones who will be getting the bill. We are the ones who will be getting McGuinty's water bill.

I think this quote is attributed to the minister, and I'm not sure which environment minister this is. He had to say, with respect to infrastructure and related conservation improvements, "About a third of municipal water is being lost to leaks ... so if you come for (provincial) funding, you have to show you have a water sustainability plan in place to make sure the water that you've got within your system is being used as efficiently as possible." Now, what funding pot the minister is referring to here, I don't know—funding for upgrades, funding for health, social services? Is the government going to hold all the provincial transfers hostage until they see a plan? Again, where does the money come from? Who pays for this plan? There are a lot of questions out there. During the course of debate, maybe we will get some answers to that one.

Now, while the government will tell us costs will be paid through conservation itself, I do know that the Premier has really stonewalled—well, did stonewall the media, stonewalled myself during question period when asked to comment on the price of the McGuinty water bill. My personal tally came in at something like: three questions, zero answers regarding new water and carbon taxes poised to take more money from the pockets of people in Ontario. When I say, "the people of Ontario," I guess the short form is "peeps." I had no idea what a peep was. We understand the Premier uses that term. I'm still not sure what a peep is, but I'd better not go there.

There's a news release I put out. My question went something like this: "Dalton McGuinty clearly has no difficulty raising taxes after looking Ontario voters in the eye and telling them that he wouldn't raise them without their explicit consent. He had no inner bell go off when he said that the HST will be revenue-neutral, knowing that it would 'be an increase in taxation.'"

Following on that, my question: "Premier, how much will your water tax take out of the pockets of Ontario families?" No answer to that question.

1720

Later I noted that when the media asked a direct question themselves about the water tax, Dalton McGuinty refused to rule it out. According to the member for Don Valley East—that would be that private member's bill—the water tax will cost families \$50 a month. That's almost double the \$350 increase to power bills that Dalton McGuinty brought in since taking office.

I was met with further silence on a subsequent question: "How much do you think Ontario families have in their pockets to take away with all of these Dalton

McGuinty tax increases?" Two questions; again, zero answers.

I put this in a news release—a final attempt, based on the facts: "Ontario families, as we know, are already hit with tax increases on televisions"—as the minister will know, for a large television it's \$26.25—"iPods, electronics, electricity, gas, HST, plastic bags, all since the 2007 election. They can now look forward to Dalton McGuinty implementing a carbon tax." I know that the member for downtown Toronto, the former mayor of Winnipeg, was tweeting at that time to rally support for the Premier's job-killing carbon tax. Again, I received no direct answer to that question.

To the question, "What will it take for you to respect Ontario families and stay out of their wallets?", I was basically told that my concerns about taxing, whether it's water or carbon, are short-sighted. I feel that there is some short-sightedness here. It is short-sighted to ignore the costly realities of attempting to raise a family or run a business in this province without taking these costs into consideration. Government policy has to go beyond just scrambling and running to get those green headlines or to get on the 6 o'clock news.

We've seen this story play out again and again. We've seen this film before. It always ends up at the same final scene: few results and a hefty bill to be paid by the taxpayer.

Energy sector: the continued refusal to consider anything resembling clean air technology on coal generating stations in the province of Ontario. We're going to run out of electricity probably in the year 2016. No new contract has been signed for nuclear. In 2016, some of those existing units are going to have to be shut down. I don't know whether anybody here is going to be around in 2016. We're going to run out of electricity.

I constantly ask the fellows who are on strike at US Steel, "How many windmills does it take to run a steel mill of this size? How many solar panels does it take to run a steel mill of that size?"

We just got started on the cleaning up of coal generation. We invested a quarter of a million dollars in both Lambton and Nanticoke for SCRs, selective catalytic reduction units, which take out nitrogen. Low-sulphur coal was already present at both plants. In addition, Lambton had scrubbers.

Nobody on the government side would pick up any interest at all from federal initiatives with respect to carbon dioxide capture and sequestration technology. Even though we have a bill supposedly based on technology, technology does not have a place with respect to this government's energy policy. That's a little scary, especially during this time of very high unemployment; supposedly frozen salaries, unless you're in a government union; fixed incomes; we had hearings on pension legislation this afternoon; and a very shaky jobless economic recovery, if it can be called a recovery. We'll hold our breath on that one.

I'd guess I could go on about the obfuscation on the other side, the confusion that seems to be purposely shipped out.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I may leave some of this to you because I only have 20 minutes left. I couldn't cover it in that.

Given what we've seen with the energy side of the equation, I shudder to think what this Premier really has in store for us when the McGuinty water bill is not only legislated and passed, but once people start getting hold of that bill. It's unfortunate that we have to dwell on the negative side of what's happened to Ontario's economy.

Maybe, on a much happier note, I will draw everyone's attention, anyone who was watching the news last night, to the announcement of the engagement of His Royal Highness Prince William to Catherine Middleton. I think that's just wonderful. I can just imagine the sentiment in Great Britain, which is in more dire economic straits than we are in North America, so far. I certainly extend my best wishes. Really, Speaker, on behalf of Her Majesty's Parliament of Ontario, we would wish to send our sincerest congratulations to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who eventually will be giving royal assent to this legislation—the Queen of Canada, the Queen of Ontario—and His Royal Highness Prince Philip on this happy occasion. God save the Queen.

Thank you for allowing me to make that statement. In fact, I'd like to acknowledge a bit of guidance on that from Alex Roman, protocol officer for issues like that.

Back the legislation at hand. I would suggest that the key to a good water plan—I know there was a call for a plan—is really economics. It may not necessarily be passing a lot of regulation and passing laws. From what I see proposed in this legislation, it is more of a demand-management approach rather than a supply-oriented system that we now have in use. The government plan is something akin to basically, "Don't charge according to what people can pay; charge according to what government feels water is worth."

Granted, we all know that water does have an economic value. It's true value is somewhat skewed, depending on how it's being used or where you live in the world, for that matter, but water does have an economic value. I fully recognize that a water-pricing policy can achieve more sustainable patterns of water use and can go a long way to continue to generate the kind of technology that is necessary for the future. We all understand, everyone in this Legislature understands, that clean water is essential. It's essential to the health of Ontario. It's essential to the health of the people in Ontario. It's essential to the health of our economy. It's essential to our prosperity; that's very basic. Water is an essential element. All concerned I think would agree that it's worthy not only of our protection but also our promotion.

There's little doubt the international community—I think this was referred to earlier—is beginning to put a much higher value on water and the importance of water, the importance of clean water. I sincerely hope that this legislation is not just another patch on a patchwork of water legislation that we see not only across Ontario but

across this country. There is concern. There is a patchwork of both federal and provincial legislation and guidelines and regulation, let alone the municipal involvement. I'm concerned that with the advent of yet another bill, it may add to this problem. We already have issues with fragmentation. We have turf wars. We have issues with passing the buck, especially when we consider where the billions of bucks are going to come from to essentially fulfill the stated objectives of some of this legislation.

1730

On top of cost concerns, the Water Opportunities Act leaves another question: Why is government creating yet another crown agency? I mentioned earlier that the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association had plenty to say about this issue. They were not in favour of this. They presented a brief, and I quote:

"We do not see the benefit of developing a new corporation with the objects of promoting the development of Ontario's clean water sector....

"The province of Ontario and the federal government have already put millions of taxpayers' dollars into institutions across the province with a sole mandate of commercialization. Places like MaRS"—Speaker, that would be just half a block behind your chair, at College Street and University Avenue and a little to the east; it would be the southeast corner, if we really want to get specific about that—"and many other centres of excellence across the country already exist, are up and running and are capable of providing commercialization functions as outlined in Bill 72. They are capable of developing, testing, demonstrating and commercializing innovative technologies. They are capable of expanding business opportunities on a global scale. They are also capable of providing the forum for governments, academic institutions and the private sector to exchange information on how to make Ontario a leading jurisdiction in the development and commercialization of innovative water and waste water technologies."

During clause-by-clause, I tabled an amendment with the committee on this very issue. I guess it goes without saying that I was overruled by government members on that committee.

But I have to remind members of the foreboding lessons that we're learning from unelected government agencies, whether it's Waste Diversion Ontario, various stewardship organizations, the LHINs, or OLG. We already have OCWA, the Ontario Clean Water Agency. Why is this legislation bringing in yet another unelected, potentially out of control, potentially unaccountable agency? We already have a ministry; we have a minister. We have the Ministry of the Environment to foster these objectives.

I don't know whether our present water technology companies—we have some great companies in the province of Ontario. A number of them keep getting bought out by larger foreign-based companies, which move their operations to places like Hungary, for example, but we have these companies. Why would

present industries require legislation? Do they need a law to improve and to build on what they already do very well? They innovate. Why do they innovate? Because they're in business. They innovate to compete. They innovate to meet market demand.

Also on committee—I think the minister mentioned the environment industry association in the province of Ontario. They obviously recognize the importance of innovation, innovation in that particular sector of water management that so many of them are involved in wading in as private sector, solving the kinds of problems that the rest of us can't deal with, that government is not in a position to deal with. The environment industry association had a concern that when the research dollars are going to flow through legislation like this, there may be an assumption of, "Let's send the money to universities." There is a relatively poor track record, on many occasions, where those research dollars in academic institutions very often do not lead to any successful commercialization. I agree with their position. I spent 20 years working for a research organization. We brought forward a number of patents for certain drugs. That really wasn't our core business. Companies, themselves, are in a much better position to take those limited, scarce resources, research dollars, and bring them out on to the market and create a commercial success.

As far as the protection of our drinking water supply and water safety, I think of our former government, of which I was a member. For decades, really, there has been a commitment in the province of Ontario for a continual enactment of water legislation and water regulation. We have put forward, amongst other bills, the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. This was about eight years ago. We put forward the Safe Drinking Water Act. We committed, obviously, to fulfilling all of the recommendations of the O'Connor report. We made the commitment to the Walkerton centre of excellence.

It concerns me that it took seven years for this government to finally come up with some sort of an approach to water conservation and water-related infrastructure. There have been something like seven or eight anniversaries of Walkerton that this government could have jumped on, as they did to garner the headlines they did last spring in announcing this particular bill to coincide with the eighth anniversary of Walkerton. That's seven missed opportunities.

The government's commitment becomes questionable, in my mind, when you consider that it delayed debate on this legislation. We went through the summer. There seemed to be no urgency. It's like the commitment—or lack of commitment—to a new Waste Diversion Act. That was promised to be delivered something like five weeks, as I recall, before the end of the last session. Yet again, no urgency to deliver on their commitments. Promises were made with respect to a new Waste Diversion Act. The previous minister and the present minister have not introduced it.

The twiddling of thumbs: We've seen the eco fee debacle over the summer; more recently the revelation

that the McGuinty government is meeting only 2% of its recycling targets. We've seen the electronics tax, which became nothing more than a tax grab under the guise of environmentalism, in my view. Seven months after it was legislated to do so, Ontario Electronic Stewardship released their annual report—seven months later, in contravention of the waste diversion legislation itself—indicating that the program was collecting \$44 million in eco fees on electronics and only achieving 2% of its recycling targets. That's what the people of Ontario got after paying \$26.25 for a television set.

As I noted in the Legislature on Monday, with a program achieving only 2%, I have a goat that could do a better job of recycling than that. Truth be told, I actually had a goat. The neighbour's dog ate my goat. It was actually my wife's goat. It was named Pepper. I had other names for it. Never, ever buy a goat, although it's good training for politicians. If you want to know how to handle issues, buy a goat. But I used to watch that goat eat peeling paint on one of our buildings—lead-based paint. Now there's recycling. That dog probably has a very high concentration of lead after eating my wife's goat.

1740

Anyway, Ontario Electronic Stewardship: The executive director indicated that this year, on a more positive note, the program has already seen a 110% improvement so far in its second year. We know they only came in at 2% of the recycling, and if I do some quick math, I guess we're looking at about a 4% success rate. I never got a mark like that in school; I can tell you that. So we're very worried.

We hear about the often-touted green strategy of this government. I hope it's not merely more bloat, more growth in the bureaucracy, less results achieved for people in Ontario. I am concerned that I perhaps see the putting of ideology before environmental and economic policy.

This lack of urgency is evident in the fact that over the last seven years, the government already had a piece of legislation that entrenched the notion of full-cost recovery for waste water and water services; they had it in their back pocket, thanks to the previous government. The question remains: What happened to Bill 175?

Bill 175 was known as the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. It passed third and final reading. It received royal assent December 13, 2002. Again, the question: What happened there? That was seven years ago. It was never acted upon. I know we've seen a lot of red tape over those years, additional hurdles for people in Ontario, for small business to clear to essentially keep their head above water. What we did see over the past seven years were seven other pieces of environmental-related legislation. This one is number eight.

The one that started with the, in my view, curiously titled Adams Mine Lake Act—I remember that debate well. On our side of the House that legislation was known as the “no landfill in Liberal ridings act.” As I say, it was curiously titled. Before 2003, before that

election, no one realized there was a lake in Ontario named Adams Mine. We knew there was an open-pit mine. It was an iron ore mine that was developed by the then Dofasco corp. They hauled iron ore down to Hamilton using the Ontario Northland Railway.

It was during David Peterson's time in office, in 1989, that the Adams Mine site—it's about six miles southeast of Kirkland Lake—was first proposed as a possible landfill for Toronto's garbage. I use this as an example. It's symbolic of the hoops, the brick walls that can be thrown up. In this case, the proponent was a Mr. Gordon McGuinty, distantly related to our Premier. He reported that the project would create 88 full-time jobs, 55 railway jobs; landfill revenue projected at \$575 million over 20 years; rail revenue to the north, \$160 million.

What have we got? Something like 350 trucks a day carrying thousands of tonnes of Toronto garbage down the QEW, the 403, the 401, one way or another, past London, over the border, south of Detroit—a very inefficient way. It creates trucking jobs, I suppose. It's certainly not as efficient as rail haul.

The spills bill—this may have been mentioned earlier. With Adams mine, they put one guy out of business, and his business associates. In this case, this government set their eye on an entire sector. The spills bill was introduced on October 27, 2004. I wish I had more time, Speaker. This is probably one of the worst cases of what we are concerned about. It focused on penalties, not prevention; it focused on sticks, not carrots; administrative penalties—I think they call them environmental penalties—all of this in contrast to what this government's own advisory committee had recommended. We had a spills bill. Essentially, if you were involved in a spill, you'd get a bill—no incentive, no interest-free loans, nothing positive as far as ensuring compliance.

I know I'm not going to get any more time, Speaker, so I'll have to wrap up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the critic for the opposition for his thorough canvassing of the issues that are before us today, and, unfortunately, the reality that one should not put a lot of faith into Liberal bills. He spoke very directly. I don't agree with everything he had to say, but I think, unfortunately, it is quite wise to not take these bills at face value, to criticize and question whether or not, in fact, concrete, positive results will come out of this particular exercise.

The member went through his experiences in dealing with the Liberal government, went through his critique of whether or not they actually deliver, and, frankly, he found them wanting. Some might say that that's simply partisan bias, but unfortunately, the record is there.

We are at a time when major decisions about policy in this province are being made on the basis of public opinion polling and on saving seats or winning seats rather than based on what have been declared in the past to be the principles of the government.

It's fascinating to me that the Oakville gas-fired power plant was described, one day, as indispensable and those

who opposed it as fully not understanding what goes on with the need for electricity in this province, but once the polling was done, it was decided to dispense with it, to defenestrate this gas-fired power plant, because, indeed, at least one seat would have been lost.

The front page of the *Toronto Star* this morning—a 10% cut in hydro rates. I've been here in question period regularly, hearing about the absolute critical need for those higher prices, and yet today the government threw its principles overboard. Interesting, Speaker, very interesting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I've spent the last hour listening to the leadoff from the member from Haldimand-Norfolk as critic for the official opposition. Let me just say that, in spending that hour, I think there's a very fundamental difference between the McGuinty Liberals and the Hudak Tories, and it came out on behalf of the opposition because the member opposite is speaking on behalf of his party.

Much of his time was focused on how taxes kill jobs, regulations kill jobs. That was a repeated refrain: punitive measures, being awash in regulations. Well, the McGuinty Liberals think that dirty coal kills people, that dirty water kills people, that pesticides kill people. That's the fundamental difference in the approach that we're taking. We believe that you need the type of legislative framework that protects people for themselves, their families, their neighbours, their children, and their grandchildren. People's lives are more important than killing jobs. That's the fundamental difference. It's a fundamental belief.

1750

We passed legislation, a number of pieces, and the member opposite was bemoaning the fact that we passed a number of pieces of legislation, on the environment. If you look at those as a comprehensive package, they're intended to do a variety of things, not the least of which is to protect individuals and their families, their health and their lives, but at the same time build economic opportunity.

This legislation is going to build economic opportunity. When the Conference Board of Canada estimates the global market for water technology at over \$400 billion, with annual growth of 15%—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I listened while the member from Haldimand-Norfolk spoke, and I want to tell you that he has a very good grasp on the issue. I totally agree with him that it was inappropriate and ill-timed to bring this bill forward at a time when the stakeholders that have the biggest stake in engaging in whatever results out of this bill were left out because of the municipal election and all the activities that the candidates were involved in. It was left up to the staff, with lame-duck councils, to deal with. I think it's unfortunate that this government chose to continue with this bill at this awkward time.

Do you know what? We in this PC caucus support clean water. We support it, and there's a track record for that. We enacted all the recommendations of the O'Connor report. We committed to a centre of excellence in Walkerton—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The hassle that we're getting from the other side of the House is because they think they can take credit for anything good that has happened in this province. You don't have a record over the last seven years. You have been riding on the coattails of other governments.

Some eight years before Minister Caplan's bill would be enacted, which would cost residents a \$600 increase in their water bills—all you're doing is bringing forward ideas that have a price tag attached to them, and the residents don't know it. They simply think that this is in the name of good water. You have to provide information to residents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I have a very simple question to our friends in the Progressive Conservative caucus on this bill, the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. What are you opposed to? Is it water or is it conservation or is it opportunity? On this side of the House, you would think that this bill would receive the support of all members of the House.

I remember the members opposite voting against the "you spill, you pay" bill. We said to the people of Ontario, "If you spill something, if you put it in the water, and it costs other people money, you've got to pay for it because you spilled it. It shouldn't be the victims down the river." Boy, they were against that.

Then we actually brought in the Clean Water Act, and who voted against the Clean Water Act? What part would you not agree with? Was it the clean part or the water part of it? I can't believe that your party ran on implementing all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. A great deal of that was contained in the Clean Water Act, and then you turn around and vote against it.

This place is very clear. We have a very long memory. This is a piece of legislation that I would have thought was non-partisan, but no, I find it odd in this place that even when we bring in an act that says that all we need to do is value our precious resource—we are blessed with this resource. We live in a world that is thirsty. We live in a world that has dirty water. There's an opportunity for us to export our expertise—not our water, but our expertise—around the world, leading to good jobs in the province of Ontario. I've crossed the province, seeing the companies here in Ontario that are at the leading edge of technology. There is an opportunity for our children and our grandchildren. One would think that that is non-partisan, but somehow in this House, people can stand up and vote against the Clean Water Act. I understand that they're going to stand up and vote against the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act. My God, this is a very interesting place indeed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the feedback.

The member from Toronto–Danforth made reference to saving seats or winning seats. Regrettably, baldly, that was what the Adams Mine Lake Act was all about. That was maybe the first piece of legislation that was brought in back in 2003, and that's when we in this House started talking about not only NIMBYism but also NIMTOOism—"Not in my term of office."

The member for Pickering–Scarborough East talked about the fundamental difference between the two parties with respect to coal generation. They haven't closed them down; there are four there. We asked this government to put some thought into this, to do some research. The plants are run by a government agency. There's a wonderful opportunity to convert those facilities to biomass, for example; biomass in conjunction with natural gas. I think the message has gotten through with respect to using wood at Atikokan.

The member for Burlington reiterated the fact that we did make a commitment to implement, to enact, all of the recommendations of Justice O'Connor with respect to Walkerton. I know that during the Clean Water Act the present government—and I know the minister touts himself as being non-partisan—the first place they went on those hearings was Walkerton. We had hearings on this legislation. Why did you not go to Walkerton with this water bill? When you went to Walkerton the last time, on the Clean Water Act, you were shouted down by a number of the presenters, a number of farmers.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): My trusty pocket watch tells me that I can say that pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), Mr. Prue, in response to an answer from the Minister of Labour, has filed his dissatisfaction. Mr. Prue, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, indeed, I am dissatisfied with the answer I got from the Minister of Labour on November 15.

The first question that I asked the Minister of Labour was predicated on a lack of ministerial response to Mr. Katkin and the non-answers to my previous questions on the issue of tip-out, on the same topic, over the preceding number of days on which I had asked them. In response, the minister said he would look into why Mr. Katkin had not been responded to as of that date, after 16 months. He did endeavour to say he would try to do something about

it, and I have heard anecdotally that in fact a letter may have finally been sent to Mr. Katkin after some 16 months.

But the second part of my question was not answered at all, and what was said was extremely irrelevant. I talked about the tip-out practice. The response was all about employees and employment. I asked about the tip-out. What I got was about the employment standards officers and how many more employment standards officers there were. But this is not the issue. Even if there were 10,000 employment standards officers, they couldn't investigate this, because it is not contrary to the law in Premier McGuinty's Ontario. It is not contrary to the law, so it doesn't matter how many employment standards officers there are. The minister knows it, and I trust the parliamentary assistant, who is here to respond to this, knows it as well. It is an irrelevant answer. There's nothing they can do, there's nothing that can be done, until the minister and this government take action.

In the supplementary, I talked about Bill 114 and the banning of tip-outs. The answer I got to that wasn't what they were going to do about tip-outs, whether they were going to ban the practice or change the law. The minister talked about the glories of tourism, how important workers were to give a positive image of Ontario to tourists who are coming here, and that minimum wage increases were somehow the answer to everything that is wrong out there with the employment standards and people being ripped off by their employers.

1800

I would suggest that this is a serious matter that, over and over and over again, the minister and the parliamentary assistant—because I've done this late show before—have ignored. We have received emails, letters, call-in shows, editorials, TV news, magazine polling, and the list goes on and on and on. If I'm getting those, so is the parliamentary assistant and so is the minister.

What I'm asking requires a technical amendment to the bill, and Bill 114 is the vehicle, or if the government doesn't like that, I am more than amenable to them introducing their own bill if they think something is wrong with mine. Do something, do anything, say something, say anything, but please don't give me all this stuff about how wonderful workers are in the province of Ontario.

There are tens of thousands of people who, every day, are getting ripped off. The parliamentary assistant knows it. I know it. This entire House knows it. They are being extorted in the place they work. They are required to hand over the tips that they get to their bosses in order to keep their jobs. That is wrong. It is absolutely wrong. It has been outlawed in other states and in other provinces, and we ought to do the same thing.

I received a letter today from a former page. That page is still 13 years old—I'm not going to use his name. He wrote me the following—

Interjection: How many years ago was that?

Mr. Michael Prue: No, he was a page just earlier this year, right in this very Legislature. It reads:

"I read about your proposed amendment for the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in an editorial in my

local paper. I wanted to share with you that I agree with your views on the matter. It is unfair for an employer to take employees' money to pay for expenses that should come out of the employer's wallet. I hope your bill passes."

This is a 13-year-old who understands this.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He gets it.

Mr. Michael Prue: If he gets it, why doesn't the minister get it? Why doesn't the parliamentary assistant get it? Why won't you answer the question?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure to rise in the House to discuss the issue which the member once again raises.

Before we actually discuss the hard work that servers do in this province, I want to clarify a point that the member raised in the House yesterday and brings up again today. He stated that a constituent who had written to the Minister of Labour last year on this very issue had not been responded to. Contrary to what he had said earlier in the House today, a signed letter from the minister was sent to the writer back on October 23, 2009. I just wanted to clarify that first, and I know the minister made mention of it today.

I know the member is well aware of the way the process of private members' business is done here. There's a healthy debate taking place, and we respect that process.

Again, I personally want to comment on the servers in this province. They are a vital part of and often the face of Ontario's successful hospitality and tourism industry.

I know that every member of this House has at one time or another been served at a restaurant or bar somewhere in this province.

Our government is well aware that we are living in tough economic times. It's not easy for some of our province's lowest-paid workers to make ends meet. That is why this government has raised minimum wage rates every single year since we took office. Minimum wage in Ontario is now \$10.25. That's the highest minimum wage in Canada. We've increased servers' wages by nearly 50% as well. It was the right thing to do, considering that workers went nine long years with no minimum wage increases whatsoever.

We are proud of our record in raising living standards of Ontario's most vulnerable workers, including restaurant servers.

As I've said before in this House, our government takes very seriously the rights of all employees in Ontario. Workers' rights are protected in this province by the Employment Standards Act. This government has done more to enforce the Employment Standards Act than the two previous governments combined. We've adopted a multi-pronged approach that consists of increased outreach, education, enforcement and prosecution, along with more employment standards officers than ever before.

I know the honourable member also wants to ensure that the employees of Ontario are protected. This is what

the Employment Standards Act does. Employees who are unsure about their rights have the right to contact the Ministry of Labour and file a complaint there.

These investigations allow me to stand in this House and say that this government has done more to enforce the Employment Standards Act. We continue to work hard to improve on what is already an effective approach. Ministry staff members have increased outreach, education, enforcement and prosecution.

My colleagues and I are very proud of our record in raising living standards for Ontario's most vulnerable workers, including restaurant servers. Indeed, I want to thank the member for bringing this issue before the House so we can continue on this very important discussion. There's healthy debate going on now, and we all look forward to all private members' business, as we respect that. I look forward to following up on this matter as it goes through the legislative process.

STEEL INDUSTRY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Labour. The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, you have to up to five minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday morning, when I asked a question of the Minister of Labour, the answer was, at best, completely unsatisfactory. The minister suggested that his government is standing up for workers, "encouraging and urging the parties to get back to the table." He further said, "We have a seasoned mediator at the table working with the parties, trying to work through this very difficult" situation.

If that's the case, how come nobody's at the table? That's a good start. Why was the government not able to effect the proper response; that is, getting the parties back to the table to negotiate a reasonable contract? For example, United Steelworkers in Lake Erie: This company shut them out for nine months. That's real negotiation; that's real mediation. They were locked out for nine months. Why was US Steel allowed to put the union in this position in the first place? I'll tell you why: Because these governments, Ottawa and the provincial government, are afraid to stand up to this US company. They're nothing but corporate bullies. They've come in and their agenda is to break unions' backs, get concessions from workers, put them in line, pay them \$12 or \$14 an hour, and make more profits, eliminating good-paying jobs in Hamilton—that's their agenda.

Why is this government failing the steelworkers of Hamilton? It makes most opposition MPPs disgusted when the McGuinty Liberals answer a properly posed and asked question with nothing but a bunch of gobbledegook. They don't even afford the basic respect to another sitting MPP of directly answering his question. They don't afford the citizens of Ontario basic respect when they refuse to provide even a simple but forthright response.

This government has had plenty of time to analyze their mistakes in the Lake Erie work situation and to implement a plan to ensure that it doesn't happen again. I guess it's happening again—TSN moment: "Happening again"—but did they do that? No. And when they're questioned about it, we get nothing but the Liberal circle back pat. They all say how wonderful they are and what they've done. They talk about safety and health; they don't talk about the issue.

When the minister suggests that it is their party that continues to encourage all those who have an interest in keeping those jobs in Hamilton and protecting those jobs, it leaves me incredulous and angry—angry for those workers who fought hard for the benefits they've attained by deferring their wages over the last 60 or 70 years. This company is cutting the legs from underneath them. This company has come to Canada and snubbed their nose at our laws—our labour laws and even our contractual law—in Ottawa. They've done nothing to help the workers; the governments have sat on their heels.

Mr. Clement was in Hamilton a few weeks ago and said, "Oh, the agreement is over October 31. The three-year agreement has ended. There's nothing I can do. I feel for you, but there's nothing I can do." Why didn't he do something in the first three years? And why didn't this government step up to the plate and encourage him to do something in the first three years of the contractual agreement that US Steel signed with the Canadian government and operates in the province of Ontario? They do whatever they want—terrible.

1810

There's nothing to protect it from the ravages of foreign ownership. We don't even control our base industries anymore. This government and the one in Ottawa has sold us down the river. We own nothing in Canada—nothing. We're at their whim. They don't step in and ensure that production of Canadian raw materials remains in Ontario; nothing to keep the Hamilton economy from sinking into its deep abyss.

This ongoing approach to responding to the opposition's questions clearly shows a government out of touch with the everyday Ontarians they are supposed to represent and support.

Just like the grandparents who have stepped up to the plate to raise their grandchildren, I have asked for this late show to give the government a chance to fix their errors, to actually let the unemployed workers of Hamilton know what they will really do to help them. And if you really want to help them, if you honestly want to help them over there, why don't you pass anti-scab legislation?

You turned your backs on the workers of Ontario. You turned your backs on the people of Ontario. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Scarborough Southwest, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I know that this issue is close to home for the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, a former Stelco employee himself. On a

personal note, I'm very proud to say that my father worked at a wood mill for over 35 years and my mother was a cleaning lady for over 15 years. Even through the hardships, I understand and appreciate the dedication of the very hard-working people of Ontario.

First, I would personally like to echo the minister's comments from yesterday. This is a very tough time for workers, working families and the community of Hamilton. I must say that some members seem to think these situations are very simple, that there is one answer to solve everything. We know that this is not true. We know that situations like these are never that simple. That's why there's a process in place. Reaching a negotiated settlement is a shared responsibility for all parties involved.

Our mediator has been assisting the parties at the table, and that's why we are urging and encouraging the two parties to find a resolution. There is Ministry of Labour staff standing by, ready to bring the two parties together, keep them together and help them find a resolution. We're more than prepared and eager to do that. As the member well knows, our focus has always been on working with the parties and helping them work together towards an agreement for both. We believe that the best agreements are reached at the table and that they are the most productive, stable and fair agreements. We're proud of our labour relations record.

I know that the member in that party has a very different view. Back in 1999, when the NDP campaigned on the promise to rebalance labour relations, they introduced the social contract, which was the largest single violation of workers' rights in Ontario history. In 1993, the NDP tore up the contracts of 900,000 unionized workers, including civil servants, teachers, doctors and nurses in Ontario. I say this to remind Ontarians of the way that things were and to beware of the party that says one thing, does another and never has a plan.

As I said, we strongly believe in the collective bargaining process on this side of the floor. Our mediators are available, standing by, ready to help, and they have a tremendous record when it comes to resolving disputes. They assist in discussions and help the two parties come to an agreement, which we believe creates healthy negotiations. We know that's good for everyone. We very much want the two parties to come to an agreement, and I want to underline that.

Along with the Minister of Labour, my colleagues the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Minister of Finance and the Premier have all been working hard on this to help deal with this very difficult issue and these very difficult circumstances. The member may recall that this government invested \$150 million to protect the pensions of those workers.

Again, we understand that this is an incredibly difficult time for those workers, their families and the community of Hamilton. It's also important to note that it's a difficult time for business. It's not an easy time for any industry anywhere at this point in time. These are the realities we face today.

Job creation, economic growth, pension protection and productive and stable labour relations remain as a priority for this government. I know that my colleagues will continue to work with the federal government and others who have an interest in ensuring that as many of these jobs as possible are protected in Ontario.

TAXATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Energy. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have up to five minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: “Dissatisfaction” would be mild; “answer” is using the word loosely, because we certainly didn’t get an answer at all. In fact, he skated all around the issue.

Let’s just go back a little bit. The question was with regard to the special purposes fund that the Ministry of Energy instituted with respect to electricity distributors in the province of Ontario. When it first came out, the minister denied that they’d even done it; denied that it existed. They got caught. Then, on November 1 and November 2, in this Legislature, the minister repeatedly said that that fund was gone, that tax was gone; a \$53-million back-door hydro tax was gone. Well, when you speak to distributors in this province, LDCs, it’s not gone at all. There has been no removal of that tax whatsoever. You know what that constitutes, Mr. Speaker, and I can’t say it here.

What we were trying to get today was for the minister to come clean on what exactly is happening here. Because just five days after that—four days, if you count the 2nd—when the minister had repeatedly said, “That tax is gone and it won’t come out on natural gas; it’s gone off of electricity and you won’t see it on natural gas,” the Attorney General was arguing in front of the OEB to keep that tax. Now, why would you be arguing to have the right to keep a tax when the minister said it was already gone? Yet, we find out that it’s not gone at all. It’s a bit of a scary proposition here in the province of Ontario when that’s the kind of thing that is happening here.

Then we find out last week, with this Sussex plan for the government to promote the Green Energy Act or promote their platform—the plan is to confuse citizens across the province of Ontario, confuse hydro ratepayers across the province of Ontario, hoping that they will somehow not catch on to what they’re doing. We’re trying to get some answers, and we get no answers from the Minister of Energy on that issue.

Of course, the speculation tomorrow—speculation; once they have their meeting with the Toronto Star, it’s not speculation anymore. Even though we’re not supposed to hear about those things until the House hears about them, the Toronto Star is already writing that there’s going to be a 10% reduction to people’s hydro

bills. There’s no explanation of how they’re going to do that. Where is the money going to come from? It’s not like generators are going to start charging 10% less. They’re going to have to create deferral accounts of some kind or they’re going to have to put that onto the regular tax bill. They chastised the previous government for freezing hydro rates and putting that deferral account for that money that would otherwise have been collected. So what are they planning to do?

The problem is that these guys are so mixed up and desperate when it comes to the electricity file that they’re saying and doing anything. I don’t even know that the minister knew what the consequences of his answers were on November 1 and November 2, when he said, “We don’t have that account. We’ve gotten rid of that. It’s gone.” We know it’s not gone. I haven’t heard anything in the House of him apologizing to the House for saying that when in fact it was not the case at all. We certainly should be hearing that. But it’s systemic of what’s happening over there as these people become desperate.

They’ve made such a mess of this energy file and put the burden on the backs of those who least can afford it: families and seniors and the like in this province. Now they’re trying to weasel their way out of it by saying, “You’re going to get 10% discount on your hydro.” But it’s like the Fram oil filter guy: “You pay me now or you pay me later.” But that bill is not going to disappear. The people are going to have to pay for it.

1820

But I must say, I am impressed that the minister himself is here for a late show. That doesn’t happen very often. I give him credit for that. Hopefully he’s actually going to stand up here in about 18 seconds and start to give us some answers, not the gobbledygook and the spin-around about how lovely and wonderful they’ve made Ontario, but how they’re actually going to run this electricity system and how they’re going to be accountable and transparent to the people of Ontario. That’s what we need from the minister.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Energy, you have up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I very much appreciate that. And I appreciate the fact that the member has summoned me to come back to this Legislature today. I had to hurry back because I was in Scarborough late this afternoon, where an announcement was being made to launch the new mall. They’ve refurbished their mall. This has a lot to do with energy, because they’ve invested a great deal to make the Scarborough Town Centre one of the most eco-friendly malls in the country. So I was really happy to be there. I had to race to get back to help out the honourable member here today, but I was happy to do that because, while we do spend a lot of time together, it’s always nice to be able to have a few more minutes to spend chatting and debating some of the important issues that come before us.

The member asked me a question today. It’s a question that he had asked me a number of weeks ago

and a question that I responded to a number of weeks ago. I was very straightforward when I responded to that question: No, we're not moving forward with any kind of a levy or anything like that, like he was referring to. I was very straightforward about it then. He asked me a second time; I responded a second time. Now he asked me again today, and again I can respond the same way.

I don't mind the member wanting further responses. I don't think I could be more straightforward than that. But it gives me an opportunity as well to talk a little bit about what conservation is all about, because what the member was referring to was resources that are required to drive our conservation initiatives—initiatives that, when that party was in government, didn't exist. They didn't do conservation; nothing. They didn't believe in conservation. They didn't understand that the return that you get from conservation is very substantial. The rate of return, in fact, for conservation is greater than any investment you can make in the energy field. So it's something that's very important if we're to accomplish our goals, not just as a government but as a generation, to build a clean, reliable and strong system of energy that's going to have enough power to meet our demand.

I'm looking forward to bringing forward the long-term energy plan. That's a 20-year energy plan that will be in place for the people of this province. It's an update to our original plan. That's something that is unique to government. It's something that shows that we're really thinking through how to ensure that this province does have a strong, reliable, modern and clean energy system. It's a plan that will lay out to Ontarians where we've been, where we are and what challenges are before us to get us where we need to go so that we can pass on this stronger, more reliable, more modern, cleaner energy system to our kids and grandkids down the road. I think that's a responsibility not just for our government but it's a responsibility for our generation.

I think it's unfortunate that the member opposite and his party don't support the efforts we're making to build

that stronger, more reliable, cleaner system of energy. They don't support the efforts we've made to build a world-class system of conservation here in this province. We've gone from one of the worst provinces in North America when it comes to conservation to one that is seen North America-wide as a leader. We've gone from a province that was relying on dirty coal—in fact, under that government, the use of coal had gone up 127%. Just a few weeks back, I had the privilege of announcing the closure of four more coal units four years ahead of schedule.

We're working hard to build cleaner air and to bring about healthier outcomes for ourselves and our kids and grandkids. Closing down coal by the year 2014 will be the single largest climate change initiative in all of North America. We will be one of the first jurisdictions in world to be able to say that we have completely gotten out of coal. What's the result of that? Cleaner air and healthier outcomes for our kids and grandkids. That's something Ontarians should be very proud of. That's something that Ontarians should rally around, and they are.

I'm looking forward to bringing forward this long-term energy plan, because we have our economic statement coming forward tomorrow. We're looking forward to ensuring that we can put all of this together to ensure that Ontarians can see exactly where we're going, from a cost perspective, from an affordability perspective, from a supply perspective, from a reliability perspective and from our opportunities to build a cleaner province of Ontario.

I thank the member for the question and I thank you for sitting and listening. I look forward to tomorrow's events.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House is adjourned until Thursday, November 18, at 9 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1825.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedzdiecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Orazietti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
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Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
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**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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